

Life Group Notes 1/5/2025

Pastor Mark Warren From Desert to Destiny Week 1

[No doctrine is a given unless it has been found in the Word given by the Holy Spirit and received by you. If you have observations or questions, feel free to send me an email with your comment or observations at tbeachhead@comcast.net. Thank you for taking the time—Pete Mehegan, the Scribe.]

Remember: Be good to one another. Be sensitive and kind. Let God heal our hearts...and guide our discussions. **PLEASE PRE-READ THESE NOTES AND CHOOSE THE DIRECTION THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR GROUP.** BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR GROUP'S TIME AND BE SENSITIVE! **Some groups would like to dwell on a single idea. Let the Spirit be your guide. Never feel obligated to complete this study.**

Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions that Pastor Mark has raised this week, 1/5/25. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide all our discussions, using the highlights as trail blazes. **The purpose is to minister to one another.** I include each of the passages mentioned in full, to facilitate the enjoyment of these notes. Footnotes are not meant to distract. This week's footnotes include:

1. [On new testament prophets/apostles.](#)
2. [On biblical fasts.](#)

*****Important:** At the very [end of these notes](#), I've included passages that were mentioned in this week's message for deeper study using SOAP journaling to help further your study during the week. ***

Pastor Mark opened his message underlining the fact that great heroes of the faith all began their ministries in the desert. Moses did forty years before going back into Egypt to deliver the captives. Jesus Himself came from the desert into power.

1. Whom else can you name?
2. Do you have a testimony?

Reflecting on Charlie Temple's message last week, he recalled how complimentary Charlie was toward him and Richie, and he reviewed a basic principle at GCC, "Anything excellent that ministers to you comes to you directly from the Holy Spirit. Anything mediocre, I'll take full credit for."

1. Did you hear last week's message? What was Charlie's point?
2. How did you respond?
3. What is your view of Mark's words here?

In his opening remarks, he observed that before God used people in very significant ways, the heroes of this faith seem to have one thing in common: Their ministry began with a time in the desert. Moses spent forty years in Midian before leading the Israelites out from Egypt. Jesus Himself spent forty days in the desert, fasting and spending time with the Father and His angels. He said, the next days of prayer and fasting are a deliberate attempt to join the Holy Spirit in a desert/wilderness experience, whether from life's experience, or of our own

choosing, to prepare ourselves for the days ahead. God was shaping them and molding them as instruments of His choosing. As Pastor prayed, he prayed that God create streams in the desert, and new life in the wilderness.

1. What did you observe?
2. How many “heroes” can you name who began in the desert?
3. Do you have a testimony?

He spoke of friends whom he recently met, and whom he just learned had been recently met with a diagnosis of terminal cancer. He said, these dire circumstances raise questions along the lines of, “God, why do you allow these things to take place?” He continued, “God doesn’t cause them, so why would He allow them? Why do we pray and our prayers are not healing? I have all these unanswered questions.”

1. Do you have unanswered questions?
2. Do you have (safe/unjudgmental) theories?
3. Mark talks about observing people going through these difficult stages, and seeing God work powerful things in their lives. Then they passed on. Do you know of any?
4. What do you recall of Charlie Temple’s testimony as he was healed of terminal cancer? What did that testimony bring to your mind?

Mark said, “There are things that need to be worked in us that will only be realized in a wilderness experience. We’re going to be on this journey for the next series of messages...through the twenty-one day fasting period. We’ll be asking what it is that God wants to do in us. This is by design, and we’ll talk about it.”

1. What do you see?
2. What do you foresee?

Recalling his own testimony, Pastor Mark related how he and Audra, in their twenties, had an important decision to make. They were in Ontario at the time, and had been offered an opportunity to return to the Honduras to work with some missionary friends, or to move to New Hampshire, where Audra was from, and take a youth pastor’s job at the Church of the Nazarene in Concord. Knowing God knew what was best, and had ordered their days, they isolated themselves in the family cottage in Quebec, prayed and fasted until they heard God speak to them to know what to do.

1. What do you see?
2. How do you hear God’s voice? Give examples from your own testimony?
3. As an aside, Pastor Mark asked, “What would have happened had we not gone to New Hampshire?” Is that a fruitful question? Explain. To what does a question like that lead?
4. Look up **Proverbs 20: 24** *A man’s steps are from the LORD, so how can anyone understand his own way?* [25 It is a trap for a man to dedicate something rashly, only later to reconsider his vows.](#) What do you see?
5. How do the results of Mark and Audra’s decision to come to NH vindicate their decision? Have you benefited?

6. What do you know of the struggles they've had over the years? How does that boost their testimony?

7. How have your own struggles served to confirm decisions you've made?

Pastor Mark spoke of our own distractions, as God put people on our path to help us and to guide us, and we missed that call each time.

1. Do you have a testimony?

2. Look up the promise of **Isaiah 30: 18** *Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore He rises to show you compassion, for the LORD is a just God. Blessed are all who wait for Him. 19* *O people in Zion who dwell in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. He will surely be gracious when you cry for help; when He hears, He will answer you. 20* *The Lord will give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, but your Teacher will no longer hide Himself—with your own eyes you will see Him. 21* *And whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear this command behind you: "This is the way. Walk in it." 22* *So you will desecrate your silver-plated idols and your gold-plated images. You will throw them away like menstrual cloths, saying to them, "Be gone!"* What do you see?

3. Describe the aspects of this promise. Who is your Teacher?

4. Has your Teacher been hidden up to now?

5. How does God communicate?

6. Look up and read the next verses, 23-26. Describe the situation you see. Is it delightful or difficult? Describe the promised blessing.

7. What happens if we pause long enough, and we make the effort to hear what God is saying?

8. Look at verse 22. What happens when you finally hear? (Notice the graphic description.)

9. Do you have idols to desecrate?

10. Pastor Mark says, "We have to understand that God is placing direction on our path so that we fulfill the purpose God has for us." Explain.

11. How is this a fulfillment of God's promise through Isaiah above?

Pastor then prophesied, "God purposed you to be alive in this world in this time, in this place, in the state of New Hampshire for very specific reasons. He does not want you to guess, and He does not want you to cruise through life, He wants you to live life on purpose, and on mission."

1. Respond to the prophecy. Does it speak to you?

2. More importantly, how does it confirm what you have also heard.

3. In **Revelation 19:10** the Angel tells John, "I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who rely on the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! *For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*" How do we know if prophecy is being spoken? What is "the testimony of Jesus?"

4. What is Jesus saying to the church right now? How do you know?

Pastor Mark took up the purpose of prayer and fasting. What do you think it is?

⊕ **First and foremost, it's to focus our attention on Jesus.** Review **Hebrews 12:**

2 *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the*

throne of God. [3](#)Consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

1. What do you see? Why the focus?
 2. Pastor added, "It's very easy to think, 'I could use a little motivation to lose a little bit of weight in 2025. Fasting will help me do that.'" What is lost if that is your mentality?
 3. Is it wrong/sin to enjoy weight loss while fasting?
 4. How do you maintain the focus on Jesus and receive the reward?
 5. Pastor says it's a time to remove the distractions from our life, to pray and to focus on Jesus. Look at **Isaiah 30:22** shown above. How is Pastor's exhortation the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy?
 6. Look at the next verse in **Hebrews 12:4** *In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.* Is this true?
 7. How do verses 2 and 3 in this passage remind us to resist as described in verse 4?
 8. Why does resisting sin have to be so difficult? (What does it mean to overcome? What is the reward for overcomers?)
 9. Describe now the goal of fasting. ...of resisting.
 10. Pastor spoke of various means of fasting, i.e. food, or electronics/social media, entertainment. Do you have a list? What successful fasts have changed you?
 11. How does the rhythm of life change when you fast?
 12. Pastor says, "If you still have breath in your lungs, God still has purpose for your life." Explain.
 13. Review **Jeremiah 29:10** *For this is what the LORD says: "When Babylon's seventy years are complete, I will attend to you and confirm My promise to restore you to this place. [11](#)For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a future and a hope. [12](#)Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.* Look again. What do you see?
 14. When did this prophecy see fulfillment in history? Why seventy years? What does the length of time say of the specificity of God's plan?
 15. Look at the specificity of God's plan for you. When is a good time to come and pray to Him? How do you know?
 16. What does He say He will do when you come and pray to Him?
 17. Remembering Daniel, what happened in history when he realized that the seventy years of exile had passed? What did Daniel do when he realized the seventy years had expired (**Daniel 9:1-19**)?
- ⊕ **Praying and fasting create dependency on Jesus to sustain us.** Look up Jesus' response to the devil, who suggested that He, being hungry after fasting 40 days, should make himself a few loaves of rock bread. **Matthew 4:4** *But Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*
1. Was Jesus able to make bread from stones? How do you know?
 2. Look at the verse Jesus quotes, from **Deuteronomy 8:3** *He humbled you, and in your hunger He gave you manna to eat, which neither you nor your fathers*

had known, so that you might understand that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. Recall the context.

3. How did God sustain the Israelites in the desert?
 4. Pastor says, "When you lay all else aside, you realize your own magnified dependency. Jesus is your provider. He is the One Who will get you through this." Explain. How does the Word of God sustain us?
 5. To what degree is the Word of God our sustenance, our bread? To what degree are you willing to accept this revelation? Do you have a testimony with which to encourage others?
 6. Remember the lesson Paul learned in his own weakness, from 2 Corinthians 12:⁹*But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest on me.* How did God sustain Paul? To what degree? Did Paul ever know lack, even while fasting?
 7. Mark says, "When God takes us through the wilderness, we learn that He is not only the voice we listen to, but He is also THE sustainer and THE provider." (Emphasis added.) Explain.
 8. Pastor asked the question that is often asked, "Why is there testimony of so many miracles in Africa. Why don't we see those same miracles here?" Can you answer (with kindness)?
 9. What are your own expectations? What hope do people living out in the bush have? Is there a difference?
 10. Where does one need most to rely on God alone, in the bush or near the Emergency Room? Explain.
 11. Pastor says, "We often turn to what is convenient around us. Jesus is now calling us to turn to Him." What will that look like? Have you seen it?
- ⊕ **Prayer and fasting allows us to turn our ear to the Holy Spirit.** Pastor says, "It begins to remove the noise/interference/distractions from your life and puts a focus on the place where you start listening and begin to hear the Holy Spirit speak to you." Look up John 16:¹²*still have much to tell you, but you cannot yet bear to hear it.* ¹³*However, when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak what He hears, and He will declare to you what is to come.* ¹⁴*He will glorify Me by taking from what is Mine and disclosing it to you.* ¹⁵*Everything that belongs to the Father is Mine. That is why I said that the Spirit will take from what is Mine and disclose it to you.*
1. Describe this promise in your own words.
 2. Why didn't Jesus complete His teaching?
 3. Whose teaching is more inspired, Jesus' teaching as revealed in the pages of scripture? Or the Holy Spirit's as He reveals the Father's plan to you?
 4. Look at verse 13 closely. Are the pages of scripture closed? Or is Jesus telling each of us that we should expect more from Him individually?
 5. Can you hear directly from the Holy Spirit?
 6. Can you be mistaken? What is required in this walk? What does it take?
 7. How do you know if you are mistaken? Do you have a testimony?

8. Examine closely the first commissioning of disciples to become apostles, sent out by the Holy Spirit according to His plan. Acts 13:1*Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch), and Saul. 2While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3And after they had fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on them and sent them off.* What do you see? List the order of these events.
9. How do we know Barnabas, Simeon/Niger, Lucius and Manaen were prophets? Is the testimony of scripture enough to establish their office?
10. What establishes a prophet as a prophet? (Be gentle. There is no "right answer.") See the [footnote on prophets below](#).
11. How were Paul and Barnabas set apart from the other prophets? For what purpose? How is this a fulfillment of what Jesus spoke of in John 16 above?
12. Was this an immediate, spontaneous commissioning? What was the process?
13. Did the commissioning happen on a whim? Whose idea was it? Was it even in their plan at the church at Antioch? How do you know?
14. What role did fasting play? What role did prayer play?
15. Have you ever been in a meeting when the Holy Spirit clearly spoke? Describe the event.

Pastor says, "I want the church to be involved together in this." He then listed the steps we need to take for this time of fasting and prayer.

1. **Choose your fast.** Decide what you are removing from your life for the next twenty-one days. What kind of fast are you going to do? Pastor listed possibilities. Some of the possibilities included, fasting from food, fasting from meat (the Daniel fast,) fasting from social media...electronics, fasting from entertainment/movies. [See further in the footnote below](#). He emphasized that you are not removing something to replace it with some other distraction, but your removing it to replace it with time with the Lord.
2. **Set the purpose of the fast.** He says, this is important. If you don't set a purpose, the fast becomes a distraction...like stepping on the scale every morning to watch the pounds melt away, when your purpose was not in the pounds but in your response to the Spirit. Mark says, "Identify what you're fasting for. Clarify your calling.
3. **Prepare spiritually and physically.** Know your limits. Physically: Be sure to bring your physician into your decisions, and know what the physical ramifications are. No fast should be done without consulting those who know your limitations. Spiritually: Have a heart of repentance. Carefully review Daniel's prayer in chapter 9, mentioned above. What is the Father's response to your approaching Him like this? How do you know? What does this response look like? What can you expect?
4. **Create a plan for prayer.** Go into prayer with an idea of your direction. Look at the great prayers of the Bible, as outlined in the Soap notes below, or in Daniel's prayers. Keep watch and make notes in your daily scripture reading, over God's

specific answers to specific prayers. Know what an answer to your prayers will look like?

5. **Stay hydrated and rested.** Review how Jesus instructs us in this principle in Matthew 6:[16](#)*When you fast, do not be somber like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they already have their full reward. [17](#)But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, [18](#)so that your fasting will not be obvious to men, but only to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*
 - a. What do you see?
 - b. If the oil and the washing mentioned relates to our daily hygiene, what is Jesus' point? How often should you bathe?
 - c. How are we to look? See the note on fasting water below.
 - d. Pastor points out that you will feel different. Staying hydrated and rested will be all the more important.
6. **Journal your journey.** When the last day arrives, three weeks from today, we're going to feel, elated and glad that the wilderness is behind us. We risk forgetting what we learned. Has the Holy Spirit taught us? God has, then, taught us. How do we shore up and store our new insights? "You want to go back and reflect on those things that the Holy Spirit said to you." Pastor reminds us, "He will honor your fast. He will honor you." Look at James 4: "[7](#)*Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. [8](#)Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. [9](#)Grieve, mourn, and weep. Turn your laughter to mourning, and your joy to gloom."*
 - a. List the steps you see. Do each in order. Journal the results.
 - b. Revisit Jeremiah
 - c. How does God honor you? What happens when He draws near?
 - d. How will you know that He is near?
 - e. What does grieving, mourning and weeping have to do with preparing to see Jesus face to face?
 - f. List the new things that God is leading you to in 2025.

The Follow-up Application

1. Use the [SOAP journal studies](#) below throughout the week.
2. Choose to fast for twenty-one days.
3. Identify what you're fasting for. Clarify your calling. Write down your purpose.
4. Journal what the holy Spirit says to you. Test the revelation.

Take the time to pray.

Scribe's Notes:

- 1. On prophets, New Testament and Old, and on apostles**—These notes do not pretend to create an exhaustive understanding of what prophets were and are. The intent is to stir a desire to discover how to examine the principles of prophecy that are revealed, and to discern the difference between true prophecy and false. At the end of 1 Cor 14:1, Paul exhorted us all to strongly desire (Greek: zelote, lust after) especially to prophesy. Prophets are spoken of throughout scripture, and, yet, one rarely hears what the nature of the prophet is, or what is the purpose of prophecy. In Old Testament Hebrew, a prophet is a נָבִי, *Nabi*, (<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/5030.htm>) Strongs tells us the noun is “...derived from the root נָבָא (*naba*), meaning “to prophesy” or “to speak by divine inspiration.” As so little is taught or understood in the West, it is important to see this definition to understand anything of the prophets. Who is a prophet? What is a “school of the prophets” spoken of in Samuel? Ask again, who was a prophet? Do they still exist? How would I know one if I met one? It is imperative to examine first the above definition. A prophet is not so defined by what he *is* or by what he *does*. A prophet is recognized by what he says, and by Who inspired his words. Hence, Strongs gives us further clarification: *The term “nabi” refers to a prophet, **an individual chosen by God to deliver His messages to the people.** Prophets in the Hebrew Bible served as God’s spokespersons, conveying divine will, guidance, warnings, and future events. They played a crucial role in maintaining the covenant relationship between God and Israel, often calling the people back to faithfulness and obedience. (Emphasis added.)* See how this definition covers both call and purpose, but does not speak of a counterfeit. Key to discernment is the fact that *a counterfeit can only be found by comparison to the authentic.* The New Testament word is προφήτης, (*prophētēs*), the Greek equivalent of “nabi.” It’s found here: (<https://biblehub.com/greek/4396.htm>) It is used in the New Testament to describe prophets, including John the Baptist, Agabus, the Antioch crowd in Acts 13, Philip the evangelist’s daughters, and Jesus as the ultimate prophet. In Greek, the word is “...derived from the Greek word ‘pro’ (before) and ‘phēmi’ (to speak), meaning ‘one who speaks before a crowd’ or ‘advocate.’” As with Hebrew, a prophet is known by his words, but the New Testament, thanks to revelation through Paul and John, gives much greater clarity. In 1 Corinthians 14:, while contrasting two gifts of the Holy Spirit, tongues and prophecy, Paul makes the purpose of prophecy very clear. He says this, “³But he who prophesies speaks to men for their edification, encouragement, and comfort. ⁴The one who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but the one who prophesies edifies the church.” Prophecy might foretell the future, as some claim. But that is not an exclusive purpose. When destruction was foretold in Nineveh by Jonah, God’s purpose was not the destruction, but, to Jonah’s dismay, the redemption of a pagan land, so lost in their own transgression. As shown above, John was given

the ultimate definition of prophecy in Revelation 19:10, *"For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."* A prophet is known because he declares outright Jesus' testimony concerning peoples, places and nations, families and friends. The new testament prophet, then, is the one who seeks only to speak what he hears the Lord say at any given time. A prophet speaks an inspired, propitious, edifying, comforting word in season. With this in mind, look one more time at the gathering at Antioch in Acts 13, where the prophets are *told* to set aside Paul and Barnabas for the work God had planned for them, the invasion of Europe with the gospel of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. How like GCC is the church at Antioch? What will it take for us to grow into this ready and willing and sending church? A note needs to be made on a doctrine that seeks to differentiate between an OT prophet and a NT prophet, allowing more and greater tolerance of error in the New Testament version. No such tolerance is biblical. The prophets mentioned in the New Testament were revealed in their office by the words which they spoke, which were recognized as the very words of Christ Himself. No prophet claimed the office, but the church recognized who had been placed in the body for His purposes at His time. Is it possible to know the whole counsel of God? No. No prophet does. Paul says we see through a glass dimly...and "...prophecy in part" according to what God has revealed, and no more.

- 2. On biblical fasting**—The practice of fasting is ancient and global. Again, pages could be written on the topic. In today's message, we saw the church at Antioch fasting and praying before sending Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, the one that began to change the entire Roman world. Where do we learn fasting? The Bible has examples. For the beginner, Daniel is a great book to read for the next 21 days, in addition to the devotions being shared by GCC. Daniel fasted at different times in different ways, and he, more than any of the writers, shared some of his methods, but also surprising results. If you look at Daniel 10, Daniel was saddened and began to fast, "...eating no rich food." Nothing happened for 21 days, and, like Israel wrestling with the angel until he blessed him, Daniel did not relinquish his move toward God. On the twenty-first day, we begin to see the serious nature of this conflict we are waging in heaven: Look at what the angel told Daniel, when he finally arrived. [*12*"Do not be afraid, Daniel," he said, "for from the first day that you purposed to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.](#) [*13*However, the prince of the kingdom of Persia opposed me for twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.](#) Look again closely. Daniel was heard on high the moment he began to humble himself. Day one. The angel was immediately dispatched. There was resistance in heaven to the revelation sent to Daniel, such resistance that an angel could not break its hold single-handedly, Michael, a chief Prince was sent to break the grasp of a spirit called the "King of Persia," a spirit who clearly rules over that land. There is much in this revelation, but the most important to grasp is this: Prayers are immediately answered in the heavenlies, but it takes our faith and determination to bring to substance the

things hoped for, and to manifest the things that are as yet unseen. We can safely surmise that Daniel paused long enough.

There are excellent books on fasting and the remarkable healing effects it has for so many chronic ailments. In no way should fasting curtail your own routines in exercise and activity. The best I've read include three highly readable books on fasting by Jason Fung, MD.

For further study:

Take a moment each day this week to apply the **SOAP**... (**S**cripture—Copy the scripture. / **O**bservation—Write what you see. / **A**pplication—What is God saying? / **P**ray—What is your response?) ...method to some of the scripture we looked at this week:

Monday: Proverbs 20:24-25
Tuesday: Isaiah 30: 18-22
Wednesday: Isaiah 30:23-26
Thursday: Hebrews 12:2-4
Friday: Jeremiah 29:10-14
Saturday: Deuteronomy 8:3-6
Sunday: John 16:12-15

Once again, some passages suggested here have more than the usual number of verses. This is not to increase the burden but to provide clarity of context. Pick the verses that speak to you most clearly, and run these through the SOAP steps.