

## Life Group Notes 1/26/2025

### Life Group Notes Pastor Mark Warren—Deserts to Destiny Week 4

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[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](mailto: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 in one meeting.**

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Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions that Pastor Mark has raised this week, 1/26. 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 footnote includes:

1. [On the sure mercies of David.](#)

\*\*\***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. \*\*\*

**To begin** the message this week, Mark related a word, an answer to a question, that he received during these weeks of prayer and fasting, while considering the increasing numbers in both Sunday services at Grace. The question that came was, "What do you need to do differently to care for more people?"

1. First look at the question. Is it a good one?
2. Have you ever asked yourself that question?
3. How is caring for more people a priority?
4. How is caring for more people a priority in your own life?

Mark continued, "As a pastor in a growing church, it's easy to think, 'Yeah this is great. Our numbers are increasing.' But I'm not impressed by numbers, but by the numbers of lives that are being transformed, by the increase in lives that are enjoying real encounters with Jesus. Numbers and bigness are not that impressive...for me that just means more work."

1. When you come in and "your" customary seat is taken, what do you think?
2. Are increasing numbers more work for the staff or for you? Explain.
3. When numbers increase, how does your own ministry at Grace increase?
4. Does your responsibility change at all?

Then he added, "I just keep thinking, 'What does this mean? God if this is **not** you bringing **your** family in, I don't want to do anything. I do not want to encourage it."

1. Explain.
2. Is popularity good for church growth?
3. Can it be detrimental?

And then, Mark says, the Lord asked him, “But what do you have to do to prepare for greater numbers?” He added, “All this is to say that when you have gone through the desert experience, and you have gotten closer to the Lord; and when He starts saying things to you, I want you to be prepared to recognize that the actual encounter itself doesn’t always feel great to the flesh, because we understand that the next step [after the fast] is also going to cost something.”

1. Explain this. Why?
2. Did John the Baptist’s task increase or decrease after living the life of a Nazirite in the desert, when his baptisms began?
3. Did Jesus’ task begin before or after the forty-day fast?
4. Do you have a testimony?
5. Look up Luke 14:26 *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be My disciple. 27 And whoever does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple. Do these verses fit better in the context of fasting? Explain.*
6. In the context of having completed a fast, at what point does one lay down one’s cross?
7. How can you “hate” father and mother and still obey the fifth commandment, Exodus 20:12 *“Honor your father and mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you?”*
8. Have you ever asked yourself this glaring question? How does one “walk away even from one’s own life?”
9. Pastor says, “This doesn’t mean walk away from your family and go around ostracizing everybody else. It means that there is a cost that we accept when we follow Jesus., when we begin to do the work that He’s called us to.” Do you have a testimony?
10. What is the cost?”
11. He says, “This is what He means by taking up His cross and following.” Explain.
12. He adds, “There is a sense of sacrifice, In fact, it may be that, when you try to ‘go back’ to what you ‘gave up’ in fasting, the Lord say to you, ‘continue on with that sacrifice. Leave off the thing you gave up, because now you see the benefit of going without.’” Do you have a testimony?
13. Has this question, as to whether or not the ‘giving up’ is temporary or permanent, arisen during this time? What have been your thoughts?
14. Will the greatest potential long-term benefit for your life be derived from taking back that which you “gave up,” or, having laid it aside, from the newfound freedom?

Pastor adds, “You have to know, it’s OK to wrestle.” He references Genesis 32, where Jacob, on his way to his first encounter with his brother Esau since the latter had threatened to kill him 21 years earlier, encounters a “man” and wrestles with him all night. *“24 So Jacob was left all alone, and there a man wrestled with him until daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he could not overpower Jacob, he struck the socket of Jacob’s hip and dislocated it as they wrestled. 26 Then the man said, ‘Let me go, for it is daybreak.’ But Jacob replied, ‘I will not let you go unless you bless me.’ 27 ‘What is your name?’ the man asked. ‘Jacob,’ he replied. 28 Then the man said, ‘Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men, and you have prevailed.’ 29 And Jacob requested, ‘Please tell me your name.’ But he replied, ‘Why do you ask my name?’ Then he blessed Jacob there.*

1. Look closely at this passage. What is strange? List the details of Jacob's aggression.
2. Describe Jacob's faith in terms of Hebrews 11. What does it take to "...not let go until..."?
3. With whom is Jacob wrestling?
4. Does Jacob's example suggest anything to you? Does it encourage you?
5. Is Jacob in any way different from you? In what way?
6. Pastor says, "I don't trust any leader if I don't see scars on their body." Explain.
7. Who in the Bible did not trust until he saw the scars?
8. What do the scars prove?
9. Pastor says, "We like to be around those who have weathered the storm and remained faithful to the Lord." Do you have a testimony?
10. Review Romans 5:"*3Not only that, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.*" Have you learned this?
11. Does this verse explain the result of Jacob's "MMA" encounter?
12. How? What did Jacob gain? List the earned advantages?
13. Can such an encounter ever be forgotten?
14. Pastor called this portion of the message the "preamble." Fit the above notes with what we have seen in the last three messages.

He begins the body of his message with a review. Last week we looked at David's eight years in the wilderness in anticipation of the promise that came with Samuel's anointing. He says, "Eight years seems like a long time, if you're dealing with a chronic illness. But we're going to go back in time, and look at Moses' life beginning when he was a little baby at a time when Pharaoh was out to murder every male of the Jewish race in Egypt."

1. How many times did Moses experience a wilderness experience?
2. Describe each. What caused each?
3. Add up the number of years Moses was in the desert. What is the total?
4. Did Moses ever receive the promise?
5. What, then, is the reward of faithfulness? (Are we still talking about Moses today?)
6. Looking at Moses' scars, why would Pastor Mark turn to Moses for counsel?

Now look at Acts 7:*20At that time Moses was born, and he was beautiful in the sight of God, For three months he was nurtured in his father's house. 21When he was set outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. 22So Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action. 23When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his brothers, the children of Israel. 24And when he saw one of them being mistreated, Moses went to his defense and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian who was oppressing him. 25He assumed his brothers would understand that God was using him to deliver them, but they did not. 26The next day he came upon two Israelites who were fighting, and he tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brothers. Why are you mistreating each other?' 27But the man who was abusing his neighbor pushed Moses aside and said, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us? 28Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' 29At this remark, Moses fled to the land of Midian, where he lived as a foreigner and had two sons. 30After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. 31When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight. As he approached to look more closely, the voice of the Lord came to him: 32'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look. 33Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground 34I have indeed seen the oppression of My people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt.' 35This Moses, whom they had rejected with the words, 'Who made you ruler and judge?' is the one whom God sent to be their ruler and redeemer through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. 36He led them out and*

*performed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, at the Red Sea, and for forty years in the wilderness.*

1. What do you notice?
2. How is it that Moses' "youth" lasted forty years? Why would he wait forty years to visit his brethren?
3. How do we know that Moses knew something about his destiny? (How did he know that the Israelites were his brethren?)
4. What catapulted him into an actual wilderness for the first time at the age of forty?
5. Was it a bad idea to exert his destined leadership upon an Egyptian at that moment? Did it work? Was he honored for his action? Explain? (Review Proverbs 20:21 *An inheritance gained early will not be blessed in the end.*)
6. If you are over forty, and your destiny is still ahead of you, how does Moses' experience encourage you?
7. How old was Moses when he encountered the Angel of the Lord at the burning bush?
8. If you are approaching eighty years old, is this an encouragement to you?
9. (Knowing as you do that Moses' next forty-year wilderness experience in leadership still lies ahead, are you still encouraged?)
10. Putting yourself in Moses' sandals at the age of sixty (twenty years after Egypt and twenty years before the burning bush), knowing that your presumption led you to murder an Egyptian, what would your attitude be toward your supposed destiny?
11. What would it be toward the sheep you are tending?
12. Pastor reiterated this principle, that the desert is actually the place where the call is formed and where we are readied for the purpose for which God has called us. Apply this to Moses at age sixty. At age seventy-nine.
13. How would your own attitude change, if you knew that the burning bush is only days and one hilltop away?
14. Why is it better not to know? What is being tested? (Hint: Faith that isn't tried is only theory.)

Look at Pastor's synopsis. "Moses is in a place where he remembers, 'God you saved me from the slaughter of the innocents. I was raised a prince in Pharaoh's palace. I had stature, royalty, means and everything that Egyptian education could offer the wisest of the land. And now, one single impetuous act has wiped it all away.'"

1. What did that single impetuous act actually wipe away?
2. What did that single impetuous act NOT wipe away?
3. Why do you understand this better than Moses did at the time?
4. Look at Numbers 12:2 "*Does the LORD speak only through Moses?*" they said. "*Does He not also speak through us?*" And the LORD heard this. [3Now Moses was a very humble man, more so than any man on the face of the earth.](#) [4And suddenly the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "You three, come out to the Tent of Meeting."](#) So the three went out...What do you see? Put yourself in Aaron's or Miriam's sandals. What are you feeling?
5. Do you have a testimony? Have you ever asked, "How could God ever use me," after you had committed an egregious act of presumption, stupidity or unkindness? Has a friend or a family member ever pointed to your own past to discourage you?
6. Answer your own question: How could God ever use you? On whose behalf might God use your gifts? Who might need what you have?
7. Make a list of the people who could benefit from the gifts God has given you.
8. Pastor speaks of the possibility of God passing over you to choose somebody else. Have you thought this? (Take a moment and see [footnote 1 below](#) on the sure mercies promised to David.)
9. Looking at Exodus 4, what is the outcome of Moses pleading with God to use someone else?

10. How do we know when Moses is ready to free the Israelites from Egypt?
11. Remembering the conversation at the burning bush, did Moses know he was ready to free the Israelites from Egypt? Explain.
12. At any point, did Moses say, "I'm too old...send someone else?" Explain.
13. Read Exodus 3 and 4. Count the arguments and excuses Moses does use to pass on God's appointment. How many were there?
14. What were his excuses? Make a list.
15. Have you ever argued against your own leadership? Do you have a testimony?
16. Pastor asks, "Why did it take forty years of 'training' in the wilderness?" Answer him.
17. What was Moses being asked to do? How many people was he being called on to lead?
18. What is the difference between leading sheep and organizing a nation of millions of former slaves?
19. Did Moses' training include military strategies and theory? How many war games did he experience?
20. What was the central thrust of his wilderness training?
21. Do you think it might be significant that the lion share of both David's and Moses' training was among sheep?
22. If you think of Psalm 23 as David's senior essay before graduating into kingship, does it change the interpretation of the song for you?

Now look at Exodus 4: [13](#)But Moses replied, "Please, Lord, send someone else."

1. Talk about Moses' confidence at the end of eighty years in training, while talking to God Himself around a burning bush that is not being consumed by the flames. Explain.
2. Have you ever had absolute confidence before beginning a brand new task?
3. What task have you completed for which you had no experience, but the outcome surprised everyone including yourself? Do you have a testimony?

Pastor went on, "Sometimes a desert experience will simply teach you how to submit to the Lord, to hear the voice of God. You have to train your ears to be attentive and to be perceptive. In Moses' situation, I believe that's what had to take place."

1. Comment.
2. If you consider Moses' upbringing in Pharaoh's palace, is it possible to be over-qualified?
3. What was lacking in Moses' upbringing?

While the team prepared for the morning service, Mark says, Pastor Richie mentioned Isaiah 43: [18](#)"Do not call to mind the former things; pay no attention to the things of old. [19](#)Behold, I am about to do something new; even now it is coming. Do you not see it? Indeed, I will make a way in the wilderness and streams in the desert. [20](#)The beasts of the field will honor Me, the jackals and the ostriches, because I provide water in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My chosen people.

1. Look closely at these verses. What do you see?
2. If something is new, what do you know about it?
3. When you buy a new device, which of these are you: a) You switch it on and figure it out from there. b) You glance first at the quick start guide. c) You read the owner's manual from cover to cover before plugging the device in. Explain.
4. How does calling to mind the former things interfere with the advent of the new thing?
5. How does the wilderness serve to clear the mind of the former things, and allow for the new and the fresh?

Pastor Mark adds, "Moses had to develop an attentiveness that allowed Him to perceive God's presence in the extraordinary and also in the ordinary." Look again at Exodus 3: [1](#)Meanwhile, Moses was shepherding the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. [2](#)There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from within a bush. Moses saw the bush ablaze with fire, but it



was not consumed. <sup>3</sup>So Moses thought, "I must go over and see this marvelous sight. Why is the bush not burning up?" <sup>4</sup>When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called out to him from within the bush, "Moses, Moses!"

1. What was Moses doing at the time?
2. If you're shepherding a flock, how important is it to see anything unusual early? Why?
3. What is the danger of ignoring the extraordinary?
4. What did Moses see, and how did he happen to see it?
5. When Moses saw it, what did he decide to do? Why? List the reasons.
6. How did Moses' response to the extraordinary trigger God's reception of Moses?
7. What was Moses' response when he heard God's voice?
8. Looking at that day, was there anything from the morning up to that encounter with God that would have caused Moses to be ready for the radical change that was about to take place?
9. Can you know on what day and at what hour you will be called?
10. Can you be sure that day *will* come? Explain.
11. What can *you* do to prepare yourself for that day?
12. Pastor said, "I'm encouraging you to allow your own faith to rise up a little bit." Explain.
13. Is it working? Do you sense now a renewed, specific call on your own life and leadership?

Pastor prophesied over us, "God has put dreams in you, and you are haunted by events in your past that would cause you to believe that you are less than qualified, but I'm telling you, you are more than qualified. But we must get to that place where we can perceive, AND our character is ready to receive the things that God would have for us."

1. Respond.
2. Have you already heard this recently, concerning you?
3. Thinking of Moses, are we qualified for our own glory, or merely for leading people out of their slavery and into His glory?
4. Remember what Paul told his friends in Philippi. <sup>3:12</sup>*Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. <sup>13</sup>Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead. <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal to win the prize of God's heavenly calling in Christ Jesus.* Apply these verses to Moses' perceived qualifications in Egypt, and the attitude he learned in the wilderness in Midian.
5. What was Paul straining ahead for? What was the prize?
6. Looking at Paul's epistles, whom did Paul consider as his prize? Explain.
7. How are we included in the prize Paul gained from winning his race? What is the ultimate fruit of overcoming?
8. Who will be included in your own prize at the end of this race? When you look ahead, what do you see? Whom do you see at your side rejoicing with you?

#### **Lessons from the desert:**

- ⊕ **The desert was not punishment for Moses.** It was a place of preparation. Mark continued in prophecy to us: "I know that sometimes you feel distant. You have done something wrong, and you have distanced yourself. You might have distanced yourself for ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty years, and I know that you're here. Yet, you still feel distant. You had a dream once upon a time, but you have said, 'God cannot use me anymore. I'll still go to church. I'll still check the box. I'll still "believe," but that plan that God had for me is gone.' I want to encourage you that that plan is not gone."

- Look up Romans 11:29 *For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable [for He does not withdraw what He has given, nor does He change His mind about those to whom He gives His grace or to whom He sends His call].* Apply this verse here.
- Apply God's promise of sure mercies given David to your call.
- Has the removal of distractions helped you to come to these ideas today?
- Have you noticed that you are hearing Mark's message more clearly lately? Explain.
- ⊕ **Obedience was cultivated in the desert.** Moses went from being a pampered forty year-old prince in a palace to become an eighty year-old shepherd on a hillside in Midian. (The only sense of his destiny was acquired from whatever his mother had conveyed to him as child in the nursery.)
  - Which position was more high and lofty? Explain.
  - Mark said, "We're doing so well as a church. I just want to do more," and the question is, would our character hold with "more?" Would my flesh be willing to die even more? Would I be prepared to receive the extra weight or responsibility?
    - What do you see?
    - How was Moses protected from falling at each of these points?
  - Mark spoke of a natural aversion to obedience. Look up Isaiah 1:18 "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are as red as crimson, they will become like wool. 19 If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best of the land. 20 But if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." Apply this promise to Moses' leadership, and explain what he knew one thousand years before Isaiah wrote this.
  - How does the desert help you reason? What voices are eliminated in the desert?
  - Mark spoke of when he was younger, and all the "things he did," wondering why he could not just coast along, having travelled once or twice. Then he observed, "Coasting is not preparation for the new thing. God is asking, 'Will you be obedient?'"
    - Observe, Paul, too, travelled around a little bit...at the earliest stage of his ministry, before he had written a single letter, he had to escape Damascus in a basket. Did Paul ever get to coast?
    - When would coasting be a part of the plan?
  - Mark says, "Obedience is where the fruit lies." Look at verse 19 from [Isaiah 1](#) above, what are the two steps to "eating the best of the land?"
  - Look at verse 18. What's the very first step?
  - Look at verse 20. What if you don't come and reason with God?
  - Pastor observes, "Moses had to learn to be faithful in the small things, like *only* shepherding sheep for forty straight years." What does Jesus promise to those who are faithful in the little things? When He says, "I will give him charge over much," how much are we speaking of?
  - Look at Matthew 24:46-47. 46 "Blessed is that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. 47 Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. Now say how much "much" is much? What are the limits to willing leadership?
  - Mark asks, "Are you at that place yet? What do you do when God tells you to pick up a snake by the tail? God is seeking to cultivate obedience in us."
- ⊕ **God's ways are revealed in the desert.**
  - Have you ever been in a desert?
  - What did you see? What is there to see in a desert?
  - Why is it easier to see God's "burning bush" when you're alone in a desert, when you might miss it online?

- Why is your apprehension when alone in a desert enhanced by your charge to keep the sheep safe?
- Looking at Isaiah 55:8 *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD.* 9 *“[For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.](#)”* Why is it essential to understand this precept as the first step in discovering, indeed in accepting God’s new thing as your call and ministry?

⊕ **Perspective is gained in the desert.**

- Think, “How did the world change when Moses accepted his call?” Answer.
- How did Moses shift from reliance on earthly provision to reliance upon God alone?
- Mark says, “Moses shifted his gaze from earthly power to eternal significance.” Paul told the Colossians 3:2 says, *“Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things below.”* What changes when you realize that God’s thoughts are higher than yours?
- Take a moment and think about your own situation. What is the source for your provision? Where does your day-to-day sustenance come from? Market Basket? Whole Foods? US grass fed? Product of Chili?
- Moses was comfortable as a prince of Egypt. He ended that with an impetuous act of patriotism. He had nothing to live for in the wilderness until he was taken in by Jethro, and married to his daughter. Then his provision came as the fruit of faithful husbandry on another’s behalf for forty years. What changed when he encountered God?
- What changed in his perspective? Think about this: How helpful is the biblical narrative itself when we want to assess the process God took Moses through? Can we see as Moses’ perspective changes and expands?
- Mark says, “God’s plan for your own destiny will only come to fruition if: you remove distractions, walk humbly in obedience saying ‘Not my way but your way, God;’ and then you can add, ‘I’m doing this according to God’s eternal perspective, and not according to my own earthly perspective.

**Steps to living this out:** (Discuss each.)

1. **Continue to make room for God.** Decide each day to be alone with God. Have a consistent, thoughtful moment where you separate yourself to make room intentionally. “The desert is not about doing more. It’s about making more space to allow Him to do more work in your life. You are clearing the busyness.” Mark reminds us, “In our willingness and our obedience there is goodness promised to us. On the other side of faithful obedience there stands something wonderful.” Then, recalling what we learned from [Isaiah 43](#) above, he reminds us, “God forewarned us that we would not perceive it, yet the change was so dramatic all creation was included in the change.” He encouraged us to turn off autopilot, and to ask God for directions.
2. **Be faithful in the small things.** Review this principle often. Look back over these notes and see how important this principle is in working out our faith. Be faithful at work. Don’t add the extra minutes to your timecard. Don’t bring home the extra goods, the school supplies, those things that are not yours or your due.
3. **Trust God’s timing.** David could have killed Saul and fulfilled the prophecy of Samuel at that moment. Moses could have gone from the murder to making demands before Pharaoh. Think of the disaster that would have ensued. Give God unlimited time to develop His plan in you. Keep your eyes on your own availability.
4. **Learn to listen.** Mark says, “God’s voice is heard best in the stillness of the desert.” Are spring peepers silent during the day? Or do we just hear better in the stillness of twilight? Mark says, “If you ever drive with me, you’ll notice there is no music playing.” He continues,



"It's my best time to hear God's voice...It's quiet. And I can hear more clearly when the distractions are gone." Respond.

Mark concludes, "If you're in a desert season, just take heart. Know that God is using this for His purpose. The big idea to take away is that the training ground is for you and me to begin to perceive what God is doing in us, so that we learn to succeed at what God intends to do through us. Moses got to a place where he was willing to risk going back to his former home, returning to Pharaoh but also to his own people despite their initial vehement, life-threatening rejection of him and his leadership. God told Moses it was time that his people, the Hebrews, needed to be free, and that it was time for the destiny that had been foretold at his birth to be fulfilled. Moses had become that leader that he had only imagined himself to be in his youthful forties. Moses, thus, had learned to discern the voice of God in the face of opposition, and in obedience, to do those miraculous acts that God had intended to do through him. Review these steps. He:

- ⊕ Was raised up as a prince.
- ⊕ Committed an act of murder.
- ⊕ Ran away to Midian to escape.
- ⊕ Became a nothing/shepherd for forty years. (In Genesis we learned that shepherds were an abomination to Egyptian society.)
- ⊕ Never allowed his heart to get hardened.
- ⊕ Proved his willingness in and by his obedience.
- ⊕ Having proven his faith and his character, was entrusted by God with a commission to free millions from slavery.

Mark says, "You might not be sent to free millions from slavery, but God is going to allow you to do something so significant, such a new thing, that you would not think it possible from an earthly perspective." (Scribe's note: Think John Wesley, who was supercharged by the Holy Spirit from a single, chance encounter on a boat with simple, believing Pentecostal Moravians.) Pastor adds, "You might think it's not possible that God use somebody like you, but God desires to use somebody exactly like you. He has someone whom He has been preparing who needs to meet you. He wants to use every single person in this church. Let us train our ears to hear His voice, and be ready for the task for which He has been preparing us throughout these short years."

1. Discuss this.
2. What do you see?
3. What have you learned?

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### **The Follow-up Application**

1. Use the [SOAP journal studies](#) below throughout the week.
2. Write out a list of the victories you gained from these last 21 days.
3. Write out a list of friends, family and neighbors who could benefit from the gifts and the insights God has given you.
4. Pray, "Here I am. Use me, Lord." Write down what you hear in response.

### **Take the time to pray.**

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#### **Scribe's Notes:**

1. **On the sure mercies of David**—In Acts 13, Paul enters the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia on the south coast of what is present-day Turkey. This is his first step onto the subcontinent, and he is politely welcomed to share a word with those in attendance. Here

is part of his testimony there: "...**33**He has fulfilled [his Promise] for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son; today I have become Your Father.' **34**In fact, God raised Him from the dead, never to see decay. As He has said: 'I will give you the holy and sure mercies promised to David.' This is the first mention in the New Testament of these "sure mercies..." and it becomes clear, reading through the New Testament, and especially throughout the epistles, that these blessings called "mercies" are a part of the inheritance that is promised to believers in the new covenant that Jesus purchased and ratified by His own blood. What are these mercies and just how sure are they? Since they are said to be, "of David," we'll begin our study with David's encounter with Samuel's successor, the prophet Nathan, a chapter after he announced to Nathan his intention to build for God a house. That evening, Nathan had been awakened by God, and sent to David to prophesy concerning the temple and more specifically, David's house. Take a look: 1 Samuel 7:**11**and have done since the day I appointed judges over My people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD declares to you that He Himself will establish a house for you. **12**And when your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. **13**He will build a house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. **14**I will be his Father, and he will be My son. When he does wrong, I will discipline him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. **15**But My loving devotion will never be removed from him as I removed it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. **16**Your house and kingdom will endure forever before Me, and your throne will be established forever. This promise, so clear and so sure here, is that David's descendants would never lose what God had promised to him, as Saul had lost everything with a single act of presumption and disobedience. This is reiterated in 1 Chronicles 17:**13**I will be his Father, and he will be My son. And I will never remove My loving devotion from him as I removed it from your predecessor. This promise was made in the beginning of David's reign, sometime before 1000 B.C. It became an exemplary promise, and the sole explanation for God's mercy on Judah despite the pernicious reigns of several evil descendants of David.

See how this promise is echoed in the Psalms and the prophets: Psalm 89: **2**For I have said, "Loving devotion is built up forever; in the heavens You establish Your faithfulness." **3**You said, "I have made a covenant with My chosen one, I have sworn to David My servant: **4**I will establish your offspring forever and build up your throne for all generations.' " Selah And again in Isaiah 55:**1**"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you without money, come, buy, and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost! **2**Why spend money on that which is not bread, and your labor on that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of foods. **3**Incline your ear and **come to Me; listen, so that your soul may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant –My loving devotion promised to David.** Notice the vital significance of Isaiah's word. This is the first time that the promise made to David is extended to all who believe, who come and who listen. Thus, Paul is absolutely accurate opening up the promise to the believers he encounters.

The conclusion becomes an irrefutable principle of the New Covenant, as Paul wrote to the Romans in 11:29 *For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable* [ἀμεταμέλητος (*ametamelétos*) without any regret, without any inclination to repentance] [for He does not withdraw what He has given, nor does He change His mind about those to whom He gives His grace or to whom He sends His call]. (Amplified Version): When we enter into the covenant with God, Who has called us and gifted us, appointed us and anointed us, that calling and that gifting and that anointing is **not** based on our own righteousness, but solely

on God's intention to be faithful to His Word and to the promise He first made to David. Remembering this promise, we are to look always forward and never back.

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**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: Luke 14:26-27, Ex 20:12
Tuesday: Genesis 32:24-28
Wednesday: Romans 5:3-5
Thursday: Acts 7:23-30
Friday: Exodus 4:13
Saturday: Isaiah 43:18-20
Sunday: Philippians 3:12-14

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.