

Life Group Notes 2/4/2024

Pastor Mark Warren The Journey toward Freedom Week 4

[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, 2/4. 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 God hardening Pharaoh's heart.](#)
2. [On history meeting art: The Prince of Egypt.](#)
3. [On repentance.](#)

*****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 began by reviewing the "big ideas" from this series. What do you remember?

- Freedom begins when you choose to be free. This is the response to those who say, "I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired."
 - Freedom resides where the balance of power lives. He says, "Where we've given things power in our lives that shouldn't be there, we've transferred power to those things, and we put the power into those things that begin to control us. Whether past hurts or addictions, these things begin to control us."
 - Freedom's power comes from the power of the Holy Spirit. You can't do it on your own. The same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is in us. He has the power.
1. What do you remember?
 2. How are you doing?
 3. Do you have a testimony relating to what you've been thinking these last weeks?
 4. Look up Romans 8:[10](#)*But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.* [11](#)*And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you.* [12](#)*Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation, but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it.* [13](#)*For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of*

the body, you will live. Paraphrase what you just read. Did the Spirit raise Jesus from the dead? How much power was in the resurrection?

5. Is that same Spirit now in you? Is there anything He cannot do for you?
6. Can He do more than you have yet been able to do?

Look up Exodus 12: [1](#)Now the LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, [2](#)“This month is the beginning of months for you; it shall be the first month of your year.

[3](#)Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man must select a lamb for his family, one per household. [4](#)If the household is too small for a whole lamb, they are to share with the nearest neighbor based on the number of people, and apportion the lamb accordingly.

[5](#)Your lamb must be an unblemished year-old male, and you may take it from the sheep or the goats. [6](#)You must keep it until the fourteenth day of the month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel will slaughter the animals at twilight [7](#)They are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.

[8](#)They are to eat the meat that night, roasted over the fire, along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

[9](#)Do not eat any of the meat raw or cooked in boiling water, but only roasted over the fire—its head and legs and inner parts. [10](#)Do not leave any of it until morning; before the morning you must burn up any part that is left over.

[11](#)This is how you are to eat it: You must be fully dressed for travel, with your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. You are to eat in haste; it is the LORD’s Passover.

[12](#)On that night I will pass through the land of Egypt and strike down every firstborn male, both man and beast, and I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. [13](#)The blood on the houses where you are staying will distinguish them; when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No plague will fall on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

1. What do you see? Are you seeing anything new this time?
2. Why does the Jewish year begin here?
3. How important is the perfection of the lamb?
4. Why is the lamb chosen in advance, weeks before the sacrifice?
5. Who eats the lamb of the sacrifice? The priest? Or the household? Why is this so important?
6. Is there significance in the placement of the blood, at the lintel and on the two doorposts? What shape is formed with this placement?
7. Why no leftovers?

Fit this into Marks theme for today:

- Freedom will ask you to obey.
 1. Explain the paradox.
 2. What happens if the blood is missing on the doorposts and lintel?
 3. What happens if you keep a lamb sandwich for the morning?
 4. How serious are the consequences of disobedience?
 5. What is wrong with saying, “I’ve given my life to Jesus, but I can live any way that I want?”
 6. (Is it harsh to say, “If you step in front of a Mac Truck, you shall surely die?”)

7. How do breaking the Laws of Gravity or Physics and breaking the Law of God compare?
8. Mark says, "Jesus is not looking for decision makers. He is looking for disciples." Explain.
9. What is the difference between a decision maker and a disciple?
10. Mark says, "Obeying what He says leads to freedom." Explain.
11. How did obeying what God said that night of the first Passover lead to the freedom of the Israelites, enslaved for four hundred years?
12. Mark further illustrates with the idea of sex outside the confines of marriage. How does disobeying that Law lead to theft, murder and destruction for multiple generations? (You don't have to be specific.)
13. See what Samuel said to Saul when Saul did "religion" his way. Look up 1 Samuel 15: [Saul said,] *"²¹The troops took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of the things devoted to destruction, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal."* *²²But Samuel declared: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obedience to His voice? Behold, obedience is better than sacrifice, and to listen is better than the fat of rams."* *²³For rebellion is like the sin of witchcraft, and presumption is like the wickedness of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has rejected you as king."* What did Saul do wrong? Is it the lamb or the act of obedience that pleases God?
14. Look at what Jesus says to the Father in John 17: *⁴I have glorified You on earth by accomplishing the work You gave Me to do. ⁵And now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence with the glory I had with You before the world existed.* Explain. How does doing what the Father said work for the Father's Glory?
15. Now look at what Jesus said in verse *²²I have given them the glory You gave Me, so that they may be one as We are one— ²³I in them and You in Me—that they may be perfectly united, so that the world may know that You sent Me and have loved them just as You have loved Me.* What is the cosmic result of obedience? What does the world see when the church is united in the bond of peace and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, obeying His commandment?
Mark points out that the Old Testament sacrificial system was a way to move sinners back into God's Grace, but, he says, "Obedience is better than sacrifice. Because if you obey, you don't really have to worry about the sacrifice part of it, right? We do not have to walk under that guilt and shame born of our disobedience. Yet if you are walking under guilt and shame, maybe Jesus is not Lord of your life. Maybe He's only a part of your life."
16. Explain.
17. What are the limitations when Jesus is a part of your life?
18. Describe the "Jesus AND..." life that Pastor Mark described?
19. Think of his bubble illustration. How many spikes are there in your bubble that distract from Jesus? Is he at the bottom of your bubble?
20. Mark says, "When you live a 'Jesus AND...' kind of life, you make all these sacrifices...i.e. a little bit of Sunday, a little offering...and you go back to your ordinary life. What are the limitations?
21. How do all these things tend to steal from us and limit our freedom?
22. What happens when Jesus is at the center of the bubble, and you and Jesus move together among your friends and family, colleagues and calendar?

23. Who benefits? To what degree?
- Freedom will ask you to repent.
 1. What does repentance mean? (See [footnote 3](#) below.)
 2. What changes when you repent?
 3. How much does your mind change? How do your actions change? How does your direction change?
 4. Describe the changes made that night in Egypt among the children of Israel. In your group, list the changes, as many as you can imagine.
 5. Have you ever made sourdough bread? What is involved? How long does it take to make sourdough starter?
 6. Why is unleavened bread a change? What is the advantage?
 7. Go further: What is about to change for the Israelites forever? Have you ever gone wilderness/survival camping? For how long? What did you bring with you?
 8. What, in your opinion, was the most daunting challenge the Israelites faced?
 9. Watch the clip of the destroying angel from *The Prince of Egypt* in [footnote 2](#) below. What does this make you think?
 10. Mark points out that the Israelites had made Egypt their home, despite the discomfort of slavery. He goes on, "If you've made sin or complacency your home, it's time to do something different." Is the allusion apt? How so?
 11. Does your comfort zone limit your effort? What steps need to be taken?
- Mark asks, "Are you ready to change some things?" He says, "You have to hear His voice. The Holy Spirit is speaking to you all the time, and the question is, are we obeying."
1. Do you have a testimony? Questions?
 2. If the Holy Spirit is our Moses today, is our response any different from that of the Israelites in Egypt? How so? If not, why not?
 3. Have you ever left comfort to move to a new place? Can you share?
- Freedom will place you on a journey. Moses says, "Get your staff out, get your sandals on. Dress for the journey. Now go." Mark says, "We're the New Englanders who stayed, not those who moved out west." Why is moving so hard?
 1. Are you being called to a new place? Do you have a testimony?
 2. "It's going to get uncomfortable." Pray for one another.
 3. If you know that the land to which He's taking you is a "Promised Land," filled with milk and honey, with greater freedom and where God can prosper you, does that ease the issue of packing and leaving?
 4. What does the move from "Jesus AND..." to "Jesus ONLY..." look like? What needs to change?
 5. What will "Jesus ONLY..." look like?
 6. What exactly does "Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand..." ask of us?
 7. Where was the Kingdom of God before it was "at hand?"
 8. Where is the Kingdom of God now? If Jesus says, "The Kingdom of God is in you," what does that produce?
 9. Look at Romans 14: [13](#) *Therefore let us stop judging one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. [14](#) I am convinced and fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. [15](#) If*

your brother is distressed by what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother, for whom Christ died. [16](#)Do not allow what you consider good, then, to be spoken of as evil. [17](#)For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. [18](#)For whoever serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men. Explain the freedom Paul is encouraging here. Is it a freedom to eat? Or is there a priority shift away from your appetite?

10. What comes with real freedom?

Pastor Mark points out that the call is not necessarily to a long journey to foreign shores. "But I am saying He's going to take you out of something and place you into something. He's going to place you on a journey, and you have to prepare yourself to be a part of the process, realizing it is going to get uncomfortable. You have to decide to say, 'I am going to walk into obedience to what He is saying to me.'"

1. What do you see.
2. Does this make you uncomfortable? What questions arise?
3. How do you respond?

The Follow-up Application

1. Use the [SOAP journal studies](#) below throughout the week.
2. List steps that will make you shift from Jesus AND to Jesus ONLY.
3. Take the first step this week and write down any results.

Take the time to pray.

Scribe's Notes:

1. **On God hardening Pharaoh's heart.** Pastor Mark speaks of how life groups are struggling with the concept of God hardening Pharaoh's heart.
 - a. Is this a good question? Have you discussed it?
 - b. What does it mean? What does a hardened heart look like? What does it do? What can it not do?
 - c. Review again Romans 1:21-26 [21](#)For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking and darkened in their foolish hearts. [22](#)Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools,[23](#)and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images of mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. [24](#)Therefore God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to impurity for the dishonoring of their bodies with one another. [25](#)They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is forever worthy of praise! Amen.
 - d. Why did God give them over? What came first, according to Paul, the foolish heart? Or the giving over?
 - e. How does the foolish heart ALWAYS manifest itself? What is the attitude toward God as God? Why is "Jesus...AND" so dangerous?
 - f. Does this explain why God gave Pharaoh over to a hard heart? Did Pharaoh refuse to acknowledge God as God?

g. Look up Ezekiel 16: [47](#) *And you not only walked in their ways and practiced their abominations, but soon you were more depraved than they (Samaria and Sodom) were. [48](#) As surely as I live, declares the Lord GOD, your sister Sodom and her daughters never did as you and your daughters have done. [49](#) Now this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters had pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness; they did not help the poor and needy. [50](#) Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them, as you have seen.* Compare the people of Sodom to Pharaoh and Egypt.

h. What do pride, fulness of bread and abundance of idleness lead to?

i. What do they never lead to? What are the harmful possible side-effects of over-abundance?

Note: The Hebrew word used to describe Pharaoh's hardened heart is *קָשָׁה*, (*quashah*), which means to be hard, severe, stubborn or fierce. It is the opposite of the circumcised heart God demands of His people, a heart rendered soft and vulnerable by a deliberate act of intimate self-commitment.

a. What are the consequences of acknowledging God as God, and seeking His face and His face only?

b. How does this play in to Mark's theme today, of Jesus AND vs. Jesus ONLY?

2. **On history meeting art: The Prince of Egypt**—*The Prince of Egypt* (1988) is one of the best Exodus movies ever made. The movie, if you've never seen it, can be found on YouTube. This clip depicts the land of Egypt and the Land of Goshen where the Israelites dwelt as the death angel passed through the streets and into the houses: <https://youtu.be/k2R07EbLjSU?si=uBUxeLnxS0fCCvMh> What do you see?

3. **On repentance**—The Greek word for repentance, *μετανοέω*, (*metanoeo*), means "think differently *after*," "after a change of *mind*"; to *repent* (literally, "*think* differently *afterwards*.") It is not merely that change of mind, but it must include the accompanying actions that testify to that change of heart. John the Baptist puts it like this in Luke 3: [7](#) *Then John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? [8](#) Produce fruit, then, in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. [9](#) The axe lies ready at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."* He even lists examples: [10](#) *The crowds asked him, "What then should we do? [11](#) John replied, "Whoever has two tunics should share with him who has none, and whoever has food should do the same." [12](#) Even tax collectors came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?" [13](#) "Collect no more than you are authorized," he answered. [14](#) Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" "Do not take money by force or false accusation," he said. "Be content with your wages." The Hebrew uses two different words together to describe repentance as we understand it: *נָחַם* (*nacham*) which means to be sorry, to be moved with regret or pity, to think better, to relent and *שׁוּב* (*shub*) which means to return, to turn back or away from the first intent. As the people of Nineveh relent and move away from their sin under Jonah's preaching, God, too, relents and turns away from His intent.*

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: Romans 8:10-14
Tuesday: Romans 14:13-18
Wednesday: Ezekiel 15:47-50
Thursday: Exodus 12:5-13
Friday: 1 Samuel 15:21-23
Saturday: John 17:4-5, 22-23
Sunday: Luke 3:7-9

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.