

Life Group Notes 8/11/2024

Pastor Mark Warren Baptism Sunday "What are you Really Looking For?"

[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, 8/11. 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 man and the "God-shaped hole."](#)
2. [On seeking God through our addictions.](#)

*****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 saying there is a reason we have come together today. If you're reading this in your group, do you have a testimony? Have you seen that your life's lessons are coming to you in meaningful progression, and that there is no randomness to your own discoveries?

Pastor Mark also talked about Pastor Richie whose youngest daughter is leaving for college, and about our own kids who are preparing to go off to college or elsewhere, whose lives are in transition through these life's seasons.

1. Do you know of any?
2. Can you take the time to pray for each? Pray as Pastor Mark said, "...That they continue their journey with Jesus. That we could commit as a church family to pray for those whom we know, who are going to college." Commit to uphold them in prayer.

Pastor began today's theme with the question: "What are you really looking for? What are you looking for in life? What is that thing you are longing for in life?"

1. What did he mean?
2. Are you looking for anything?
3. What have you found so far on this quest?

He starts by speaking of the "God-shaped hole" in every one of us that only God can fill, a concept that has been repeated over the ages. ([See footnote 1 below.](#))

He says we have needs, plans, careers that give purpose, but through all these, there is only One that can fulfill our desires. He points out that eastern religions have been seeking to fill this hole in many ways. He mentions terms proponents of these religions use that are meant to lead to balance, contentment, peace.

1. Do you know any of these terms?
2. What purpose does each of the needs we pursue above serve?
3. What have you ever seen in eastern thought and religion?
4. Define balance, contentment and peace. What brings balance, contentment and peace?
5. What robs us of each?
6. Why is it that the pursuit of these qualities does not lead to the possession thereof? How *do* we possess these qualities?

Look up John 14: [25](#)All this I have spoken to you while I am still with you. [26](#)But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have told you. [27](#)Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled; do not be afraid.

1. What is Jesus saying?
2. While He was with them, did the apostles have peace? To what degree? Why? Or why not?
3. Who is now the author of peace? What do you know of the Holy Spirit?
4. If Jesus “left” His peace, how does one obtain it? Where is it found?
5. Has peace been hidden?
6. How does the world, and how do the eastern religions Mark mentioned, give peace?
7. What are the limitations to the peace the world “gives?”
8. If Jesus says, “Do not let your hearts be troubled,” is that an easy thing? Or a difficult thing? Do you have a testimony?

Continue with what Jesus said: [28](#)You heard Me say, ‘I am going away, and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved Me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I.[29](#)And now I have told you before it happens, so that when it does happen, you will believe. [30](#)I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming, and he has no claim on Me. [31](#)But I do exactly what the Father has commanded Me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.

1. Summarize what you see here.
2. When the disciples heard Him say, “I’m going away, and I’m coming back,” did they understand?
3. When did Jesus go away? How did He come back to them? Did He ever leave them or forsake them? Why not?
4. How not?
5. Why should we rejoice that Jesus is leaving us? How does the Father being greater than Jesus bring US joy? Whom does He send?
6. How is being with the Spirit greater than being with Jesus in beard and sandals?

7. How does it help to know what's ahead before it happens?
8. Did that knowledge keep the disciples from panicking? How did it eventually help? How was their faith enhanced?
9. Who was the "Prince of this World?" How did he lose all power that day?
10. Who is Prince of Peace, Lord of lords and King of kings today? How do we prove it? How do we make this known? What does our life show?
11. How is it that the Prince of this world has no claim on Jesus? How did Jesus prove that throughout His ministry?
12. How can you know he has no claim on you?
13. How did Jesus prove His affiliation, indeed His love for the Father?
14. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey my commandments." Looking at verse 21, how does obeying Jesus make us imitators of Him?
15. What proves that we are affiliated with Jesus, indeed that we love Him?

Look up John 10: [10](#)*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life, and have it in all its fullness.*

1. What does the world give? What does Jesus give?
2. To what degree?
3. What do you think: What does "in all its fullness" entail? Is anything missing?
4. Can you add anything to what Jesus gives?
5. Mark paused to refer to the turmoil in this world. How does Jesus' promise here help us navigate the days ahead with its turmoil?
6. How do our own addictions mask our longing for God? Does the "peace" brought by satisfying an addiction ever last?
7. Jesus said, "I did not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it." Explain.
8. How is the Law of Love the fulfillment of the Law? How does obedience to this law bring peace?

Pastor says the Law was written to bring peace. There were laws about family. Laws about behavior. Read Psalm 119. Peace was to come by obeying these laws. Today we are a nation of laws. We are raised in this country to obey the laws.

1. What do you think? What is the purpose of laws?
2. How do you feel when you are driving above the speed limit?
3. ...when you see a speed trap when you are driving above the speed limit? Explain? What happened to your peace?
4. Why is knowing right from wrong insufficient to bring us peace as Pastor claims?
5. Why does peace begin ONLY with a relationship with Jesus?
6. Why is our world so anxious today?
7. How easy is it to become anxious in this environment?
8. How do you respond to the anxiety the world is offering us?

Look at what Jesus says in John 8: [28](#)*So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing on My own, but speak exactly what the Father has taught Me.* Compare this to what He prays to the Father in John 17: [8](#)*For I have given them the words You gave Me, and they have received them. They*

knew with certainty that I came from You, and they believed that You sent Me. And now look at John 5: [19](#)So Jesus replied, "Truly, truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing by Himself, unless He sees the Father doing it. For whatever the Father does, the Son also does. [20](#)The Father loves the Son and shows Him all He does. And to your amazement, He will show Him even greater works than these. [21](#)For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He wishes... [30](#)I can do nothing by Myself; I judge only as I hear. And My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

1. What do you notice?
2. Pastor asks, what would it look like if we were determined only to say what we hear Jesus say and do what we see Jesus do?
3. What steps would we need to take?
4. What kind of peace would we have?
5. When Jesus says, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and all these things will be added...", what all things get added? What does not get added?
6. What falls in line when your priority is "Kingdom first?"
7. What do you seek first? How does anyone change that?
8. Look at what Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 4: [17](#)For our light and momentary affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory that is far beyond comparison. [18](#)So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. Why do we seek the Kingdom first?
9. How distracting are the events and afflictions in this world today?
10. Have our addictions become a substitute for seeking the Prince of Peace? ([See footnote 2](#))
11. Who benefits when we fix our ears and eyes on what Jesus says and does, and imitate Him, repeating what we hear and doing what we see?
12. How important is it that we walk by faith AND NOT by sight?
13. How is His love so attractive that we long to be loved and to love in return?
14. How is this love the best proof of the existence of God? What makes it supernatural?

The Follow-up Application

1. Use the [SOAP journal studies](#) below throughout the week.
2. Commit to uphold those for whom we prayed today in prayer as they are away at college or wherever they have been led to go.
3. Decide what steps you need to take to order your words and your walk after what you hear Jesus saying and see Jesus doing.
4. Pray that you clearly hear His still small voice today. Make this prayer a habit.

Take the time to pray.

Scribe's Notes:

1. **On man and the God-shaped hole**—The concept of a God-shaped hole in us that only God can fill has been attributed through time to many authors including G.K. Chesterton and C.S. Lewis. The origin of the concept, though, actually traces back to a French philosopher, and Christian apologist named Blaise Pascal. Here is an interesting article on this: In 1670, Blaise Pascal published *Pensées*, which was a defense of the Christian religion. (It should be noted that this book was published after his death in 1662.) In that book, he has a quote: “What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself.”

- Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* VII (425). Since then, the concept has taken on a life of its own and the phrase "God-shaped hole," a close approximation of the concept, has been found throughout many Christian circles. (Recently, in 2002, a book was published with the title 'God-Shaped Hole'.)

<https://christianity.stackexchange.com/questions/2746/where-does-the-concept-of-a-god-shaped-hole-originate#2775>

2. **On seeking God through our addictions**—Pastor spoke of how the addict reaching out to his addiction is seeking the peace that only God brings. G.K. Chesterton was quoted to say the man ringing the doorbell of a brothel was actually looking for God. This article sheds light on that misquote, and it's delightfully insightful, corroborating Pastor's suggestion: “*This brings me to a similarly powerful and instructive quote that has made the rounds for decades among noted evangelical writers and speakers. It has G.K. Chesterton saying “The man who rings the bell at the brothel, unconsciously does so seeking God” or some such. Perhaps you’ve heard it and even used it yourself. It’s meant to explain that the fundamental orientation of the human heart is to seek God and the peace, meaning, and truth that only he can bring; the God-shaped hole we are all created with. And when we chase after everything else—women, romance, riches, power, position, knowledge—we do so seeking God, even if we can’t realize it. But, as you might imagine, it was not Chesterton who said it. But thankfully it does have a source. A great one. It comes from a small and positively delightful 1945 novel, The World, the Flesh and Father Smith written by a lesser-known, mid-twentieth century Scottish writer, Bruce Marshall. His style reminds one of Flannery O’Connor in her hilariously biting sarcasm, coloring for her reader serious spiritual truths in the lives of her larger-than-life idiotic characters.*

Our quote appears in a conversation between the book’s protagonist, the dutiful Father Smith, while walking home one day, encounters a beautiful, seductive young woman standing on her front stoop. Miss Dana

Agdala is provocatively accented by her “frock blowing all around her lovely legs.” She introduces herself to Father Smith as the author of the scintillating and best-selling *Naked and Unashamed*, “but perhaps you haven’t read me.”

She asks the priest, “Tell me, do you get much response to the old, old story these days?” She, a modernist had long rejected “[a]ll that poppycock about baptism, and purity and the Virgin Birth...” because, of course, “it’s against all modern science and obstetrics.”

She explains to our cleric that she’d, “been dying for years to meet a Catholic priest, but somehow there never seems to be any at any of the parties I go to.” She had “oodles and oodles to ask you about that I don’t know if I’ll ever have time.”

He invited her to walk along to his next appointment and ask away. Among many questions, built upon her judgment of the silliness of his faith, she asked about his own sexuality and how he manages to, as she put it, “live without us?”

Easily and confidently, Fr. Smith answers that, in his view, “women’s bodies are rarely perfect; they soon grow old and sag, and always the contemplation of them even at their best is a poor and boring substitute for walking with God in His House as a friend . . .”

Miss Agdala judges that Fr. Smith’s answer proves what she had always maintained about Christians, “that religion is only a substitute for sex.”

Fr. Smith counters roundly, “I still prefer to believe that sex is a substitute for religion and that the young man who rings the bell at the brothel is unconsciously looking for God.”

So, there you have it. Man desperately seeks God, even in all the most ungodly places.

Those very true and insightful words are from the mouth of our delightfully unflappable Father Smith, even if the great Chesterton might indeed wish he had said them.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/factchecker-c-s-lewis-and-g-k-chesterton-quotes/>

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: John 14:25-27
Tuesday: John 14:28-31
Wednesday: John 10:10
Thursday: Matthew 5:16-18
Friday: John 5:19-21, 30
Saturday: John 8:28-29, 17:8
Sunday: 2 Corinthians 4:17-18

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.