

Life Group Notes 8/31/2025

Pastor Mark Warren Stand Firm

Week 8

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 heart 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, 8/31. 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 speaks:

1. [On the persecutions Timothy observed in Iconium, Lystra and Derby.](#)
2. [On imitating Paul.](#)

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 began the morning's message saying, "Guess what! I have something to tell you...God brought you here today, and because He did, that means He has something special to relate to you...God is moving in your hearts," recalling that we come out on Sunday for a reason. He spoke of an encounter with new friends to whom he asked why they had come to GCC, and they spoke of a desire to grow in their relationships to Jesus. Then he outlined reasons to come out for a message on Sundays. He said, "That's why we're here. We come, not to be entertained...because you know God is doing something [personal] in and through your life. You are realizing that He is drawing you, that He loves you and forgives you...and that He has something good in store for you."

1. What do you see?
2. Can you add to the list?
3. Do you have a testimony? Is it easy to come out on a Sunday?

He began, "The Christian life is not easy. It is challenging. It can feel like a roller coaster with potholes...if you can visualize that. Sometimes we need to reestablish that this life isn't going to be easy...We will have struggles, but He promises that He will be with us every step of the way."

1. Do you agree?
2. What advice do you give a new Christian friend who is just starting out?
3. Do you have a testimony? What have you overcome?

We are looking again at Paul's last words to Timothy as he wrote from his Roman prison.

1. What do you recollect from the previous messages?
2. Does Paul sugarcoat his message to Timothy?
3. Over the last weeks, what in the messages, has most challenged you?
4. How do we know we are living in the last days?
5. What significant events sobered you most this week?
6. Why do we need the "hard truth" more than sugarcoated assertions?
7. When God tells you, "I am doing something [personal] in and through your life..." why is that both scary and sobering? What is included?
8. God did something in and through Timothy's life. How important was it that Timothy be equipped to face the days that lay ahead?
9. How much time did Paul have left to pass on the equipment, or as Pastor Bill said, the baton to Timothy?

Look at 2 Timothy 3: [10](#) *You, however, have observed my teaching, my conduct, my purpose, my faith, my patience, my love, my perseverance, [11](#) my persecutions, and the sufferings that came upon me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.*

1. What do you see?
2. Without peeking (at [Acts 16](#) or [at footnote 1, below](#)), how has Timothy observed Paul's teaching and conduct?
3. How has he observed Paul's faith and patience? Where did he observe Paul's love? His perseverance?
4. Where are Antioch, Iconium and Lystra located? ([See footnote 1.](#))
5. What specific sufferings and persecutions came upon Paul in Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium and Lystra? What sufferings did Timothy observe in Philippi?
6. How often did Timothy observe these sufferings? About how old was he as each incident occurred?
7. Did the Lord really rescue Paul? Or are these just random, religious words? Can you prove the claim?
8. (How many people throughout history do you know of that were stoned, left for dead, and got up and preached the next day in the same towns and villages? How many were beaten and chained in prison, to be unchained by an earthquake?)

He continued: [12](#) *Indeed, all who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, [13](#) while evil men and imposters go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. [14](#) But as for you, continue in the things you have learned and firmly believed, since you know from whom you have learned them. [15](#) From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ*

Jesus. **16***All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for instruction, for conviction, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17**so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.*

1. What do you see? What is Paul asking Timothy to observe?
2. How does Paul's example become Timothy's tutor?
3. Look at what Paul tells the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 11:1 ***You are to imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.*** **2***Now I commend you for remembering me in everything and for maintaining the traditions, just as I passed them on to you.* How long was Paul in Corinth, teaching them?
4. Take a moment to look at the links listed on this verse's [BibleHub page \(click here\)](#). How many times in how many passages by how many authors are we exhorted to imitate those whom we are following? Explain. ([See footnote 2 below.](#))
5. Can you safely ask others to imitate you? Why or why not?

Mark then began to speak of the four ways to stay rooted in Christ when life gets difficult:

✚ **It begins by honestly being able to say, "Look at my life. Follow my conduct."**

If we can understand that people will be inspecting your life to see if Jesus is real, and if your neighbor wants to start to follow Christ, can you say, "Follow me?"

1. Look at Philippians 3:17 *Join one another in following my example, brothers, and carefully observe those who walk according to the pattern we set for you.* How does Paul set the standard and the pattern for instruction wherever he goes?
2. Evaluate the example you set. How are you doing?
3. Can you say, "Follow my patience?" "Follow my perseverance?" "Follow my love?" "Follow my conduct?" Which is your strongest point?
4. Which is easier for you to say: "Follow my doctrine?" or "Follow my example?"
5. Pastor asks, "What does it mean to die to yourself?" Do you have an answer?

✚ **Suffering and opposition and persecution are a normal part of the Christian life following Jesus. (It is not a sign that you are doing something wrong.)**

Pastor says, "If we remain mindful that people are looking at us to see if Jesus is real, when we go through hard times, the observers will observe, 'The proof is in the pudding.' Your behavior [in trials] will enforce a message."

1. What do you see? How do you do in difficult circumstances?
2. Look up Habakkuk 3: **17***Though the fig tree does not bud and no fruit is on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though the sheep are cut off from the fold and no cattle are in the stalls, **18**yet I will exult in the LORD; I will rejoice in the God of my salvation! **19**GOD the Lord is my strength; He makes my feet like those of a deer; He makes me walk upon the heights!* Describe in your own words the difficult times Habakkuk describes.
3. How does the prophet respond in difficult times?
4. What happens, what changes, what does God do when the prophet responds like this?
5. How does Habakkuk's example help you?
6. Look how Micah responds in 7: **6***For a son dishonors his father, a daughter rises against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's enemies are the members of his own household. **7**But as for me, I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me. **8**Do not gloat*

*over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will arise; though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light. **9**Because I have sinned against Him, I must endure the rage of the LORD, until He argues my case and executes justice for me. He will bring me into the light; I will see His righteousness.* What are the prophet's circumstances? Can you relate to them?

7. How does the prophet respond to difficult times?
8. What does the prophet expect, and prophesy into life and into reality?
9. How does Micah's example affect you?
10. Look up Psalm 23: **4***Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. **5**You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. **6**Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.* What do you know to be David's circumstances? List them. Can you relate to them?
11. How does the prophet/singer respond to difficult times?
12. What does the prophet/singer expect?
13. How does David's example effect you? For what purpose have we been gifted with scripture?
14. How precious is this gift? Can you take a moment to thank the giver for this gift?

Pastor says, "Persecution might look different to us than it did in Paul's day.

1. Does it always? What do you know of the persecution of Christians today?
2. Where is it most difficult to be a Christian and live?
3. What does persecution look like in your circles?
4. Have you ever been imprisoned for the Word's sake? Do you have a testimony?
5. What is our response to the persecuted church?
6. Look at what Paul told the Corinthians, taking up an offering for the troubled churches in Jerusalem before Paul's final trip there: 1 Corinthians 16: **1***Now about the collection for the saints, you are to do as I directed the churches of Galatia: **2**On the first day of every week, each of you should set aside a portion of his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will be needed. **3**Then, on my arrival, I will send letters with those you recommend to carry your gift to Jerusalem. **4**And if it is advisable for me to go also, they can travel with me.* What do you see? How practical is Paul's advice on giving?
7. Is there persecution in the Corinthian church at the time Paul wrote this? What is their focus in a time of relative peace?

Pastor Mark spoke of how he celebrated a couple's 25th wedding anniversary, and what a joy it was.

1. Why is marriage under attack in our society?
2. Without opening old wounds, what is lost when a marriage is lost?
3. How can the church help?
4. How does a marriage represent and reflect the relationship between Christ and the church?
5. Why does the enemy despise the couple that dies to themselves to love and serve their spouse? What do others see in a healthy couple?

Pastor Mark referred to this story of Noah's drunkenness after the flood, from Genesis 9: ***18**The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham was the father of Canaan. **19**These three were the sons of Noah, and from them the whole earth was populated. **20**Now Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. **21**But when he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and uncovered himself inside his tent. **22**And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside. **23**Then Shem and Japheth took a garment and placed it across their shoulders, and walking backward, they covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned away so that they did not see their father's nakedness.*

1. What do you see?
2. Using Shem's and Japheth's example, explain what it means that, "Love covers a multitude of sins."
3. Talk about Noah. Is he a hero of the faith? Or did he bring shame to the church?
4. Explain. How does that work? Whom can we depend on to cover us?
5. What does Jesus' blood do for our sin? How does that work?
6. Does our own blood cleanse and nourish and heal the body from the outside, or is blood's cleansing and nourishing function only internal? Explain.
7. Why must we have Jesus on the inside, and not just in appearance?

Pastor went on to say, "We are called to be salt and light. Guess what...darkness does not like light."

1. It was once said, "We are not called to fight the darkness. We are only called to shine. The light will do the rest." How does that work?
2. Who represents the light in Noah's situation? Explain.
3. Whose example do you follow? Canaan's or Shem's and Japheth's?
4. Pastor says, "Don't be shocked when opposition comes. Realize that you will have difficulties. Do not be overwhelmed. James told us to 'Consider it all joy when you face trials of various kinds.'" What is included in "various kinds" of trials?
5. Why does James tell us to consider it **joy**? Is he crazy? (Pastor's answer, "Because it forms us in the process. We're the clay and He's the potter." Explain.)

✦ **Deception is real.**

1. How does deception sneak into our lives—even as Christians?
2. Look back at verse 13, above: ***13**while evil men and imposters go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.* In your own words, what does this warn us of?
3. Have you seen imposters? Are they going from bad to worse?
4. Are all deceivers deceived? Explain.
5. What happens if you imitate deception? Do you have a story?
6. Mark says, "Satan will not show up in a red Lycra jumpsuit with horns and a pitchfork." What do evil men and imposters wear?
7. How do you recognize imposters? How do you respond?
8. Pastor says, "They come in through compromise, through the thought that says, 'This isn't so bad...'" Explain.
9. He says, "Compromise creates deception. And deception is so cloaked, the deceived does not even know he's being deceived." Avoiding politics for the sake of

the principle, can you think of an illustration of this? Have you seen this happen around you?

10. Pastor says, "As fellow believers, we help each other not as Canaan did, by pointing fingers, but we come alongside someone, and invite them to examine scripture with us...to consider the issue together. We allow the Lord to work to take the scales from our eyes." Can that work? Do you have a testimony?

11. Explain how faith, patience and prayer work. Have you had success with these?

Pastor says, "We have an enemy that preys on our weaknesses and doubts. We see him in the Garden, asking, 'Did God really say?' His tricks are not new. He misquotes scripture, and then asks, 'Is this what God really said? It's just a little bite. That won't kill you...' Then we wonder how we get off course, and start experiencing the pain of sin because we have let ourselves be deceived."

1. What do you see?
2. Do you have a confession? A testimony? A prayer to offer? A prayer for others?
3. Can we pray for pastors and leaders right now who are being assaulted in compromise?
4. Pastor says, we are better when we are together. Explain.

✦ **Continue in what you believe.**

We have a rock that keeps us grounded when the world feels upside down. Review verse: ***14**But as for you, continue in the things you have learned and firmly believed, since you know from whom you have learned them. **15**From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

1. What do you see? From what you know of Timothy's background, from whom did Timothy learn things?
2. How do we know Timothy was trained up as a child in the way he should go?
3. What is the promise to parents associated with that instruction?
4. Answer this carefully: What circumstances in his life worked together to make Timothy the man and the leader that he was?
5. Did you include troubles, oppression and persecution?
6. How did his mother and his grandmother help? (What do we know about his father?)
7. How did Timothy's attention to scriptures help?
8. How did Paul's example help?
9. Is it possible to stand still and follow Jesus? (Pastor Mark says it is not.) Explain.
10. Pastor Peter Bonanno, founding pastor of GCC, once spoke a word of wisdom, "If it's not growing, it's dead." Explain.
11. Where does life come from? How is life recognized?
12. Look at the end of verse 15. What are Scripture's benefits?
13. Look at the promised benefits from the beginning of Proverbs 1: ***1**These are the proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel, **2**for gaining wisdom and discipline, for comprehending words of insight, **3**and for receiving instruction in wise living and in righteousness, justice, and equity. **4**To impart prudence to the simple and knowledge and discretion to the young, **5**let the wise listen and gain instruction, and the discerning acquire wise counsel **6**by understanding the proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise. **7**The fear of the LORD*

is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. Make a list of the benefits established here. How are these benefits obtained?

14. Compare these benefits to those Paul described above. Is he quoting Solomon?

15. How are fools recognized clearly?

16. Pastor's last question: "If somebody followed your conduct, where would they end up?" Answer him.

Follow up application:

1. Use the [Soap study below](#) to pursue your own understanding.
2. List what you are practicing that others could imitate and learn from. List what needs to change, if others are going to follow you. Live in such a way that others can recognize and follow your example.
3. Expect persecution. Don't run from it. Don't be sad. Review Habakkuk, Micah and David.
4. Guard your heart against deception. Pray as David prayed in Psalm 139:23
"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. 24[See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the way everlasting.](#)*"* Recognize and list the sin and weakness that come to mind, threatening you with failure. Deal with it quickly. Move forward, surrounding yourself with strong fellows.
5. Return to scripture, daily. Get rooted. They contain everything you need to live a faithful life. Review this message. Use the notes. Revisit scripture again.

Take the time to pray.

Scribe's Footnotes:

1. **On the persecutions Timothy observed in Iconium, Lystra and Derby**—One of the remarkable characteristics of the Bible we have is what is called *internal consistency*. Where the claims of the Bible can be corroborated *externally* by the geography and the archaeology of the lands in which the narrative takes place, even within the writings themselves, the claims and the accounts match and support each other. In the passage we looked at, Paul continues to remind Timothy of what he knew firsthand of Paul, as Timothy was eyewitness to the events that occurred at Paul's first visit to his childhood home in Lystra and surroundings. Luke recounts Paul's first missionary journey to the region of Lycaonia in southern Galatia, where the cities of Iconium, Derby and Lystra are found. Acts 14: [4](#)*The people of the city were divided. Some sided with the Jews, and others with the apostles. 5*[But when the Gentiles and Jews, together with their rulers, set out to mistreat and stone them, 6](#)*they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding region, 7*[where they continued to preach the gospel.](#) Read this as if the gospel were being presented for the first time: [8](#)*In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. 9*[This man was listening to the words of Paul, who looked intently at him and saw that he had faith to be healed. 10](#)*In a loud voice Paul called out, "Stand up on your feet!" And the man jumped up and began to walk. 11*[When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices in the Lycaonian language: "The gods have come down to us in human form!" 12](#)*Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes, because he was the chief*

speaker. **13**The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates, hoping to offer a sacrifice along with the crowds. **14**But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul found out about this, they tore their clothes and rushed into the crowd, shouting, **15**"Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. **16**In past generations, He let all nations go their own way. **17**Yet He has not left Himself without testimony to His goodness: He gives you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness." **18**Even with these words, Paul and Barnabas could hardly stop the crowds from sacrificing to them. **19**Then some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and won over the crowds. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, presuming he was dead. **20**But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. And the next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe. **21**They preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, **22**strengthening the souls of the disciples and encouraging them to continue in the faith. "We must endure many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. **23**Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church, praying and fasting as they entrusted them to the Lord, in whom they had believed. Describe what Timothy was eyewitness to, as a child, years before he asked to join Paul on his second missionary journey that led them to Philippi. Look at verse 22. Take it to heart.

2. **On imitating Paul**—Paul says this to the Corinthians in chapter 11: **1**You are to imitate me, just as I imitate Christ. **2**Now I commend you for remembering me in everything and for maintaining the traditions, just as I passed them on to you. This is not the only time we're told to imitate those who have successfully walked the walk. Click here on [BibleHub's page for this verse](https://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/11-1.htm), (https://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/11-1.htm) and follow the references. You will have a life-changing Bible study, and a call to determined, intentional living for the sake of the example you are setting. Check it out.

For further study:

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

Monday: 2 Timothy 3:10-13
Tuesday: 2 Timothy 3:14-15
Wednesday: 2 Timothy 3:16-17
Thursday: Hebrews 4:11-13
Friday: 2 Peter 1:19-21
Saturday: Romans 15:3-6
Sunday: Habakkuk 3:17-19

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.