

Life Group Notes 10/19/2025

Sacred Order Week 3:

The Birth of the Church

Mark Warren

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.

Leaders: *please pre-read these notes and choose the direction that is appropriate for your group. Scan the detailed questions that follow the AI-generated study questions, to see if you want to add any more detailed questions.*

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, 10/19. 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***

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.

The new format begins with a summary of the notes, followed by study questions. This week, notes in full detail can be found beginning on page 3:

Section I: Summary

Here's "co-pilot's" AI summary of the Sermon Lifegroup Notes:

Main Theme:

The notes focus on the **birth of the Church** as described in Acts 2, emphasizing that the Church is not a building, but the people filled with the Holy Spirit. The study explores what changed at Pentecost, the purpose and mission of the Church, and how God's presence now dwells within believers rather than in a physical temple.

Key Points:

- **Review of Previous Weeks:** Reflects on principles about family and the Church discussed earlier.

- **Church Identity:**
 - “God doesn’t want me to go to church, He wants me to be the church.”
 - The Church is people, not a building.
- **Acts 2 and Pentecost:**
 - The coming of the Holy Spirit marks the birth of the Church.
 - God’s presence is now with and in His people, not confined to a temple.
 - Jesus’ ascension was necessary so the Holy Spirit could come.
- **Empowerment and Mission:**
 - Pentecost empowered believers for God’s mission.
 - The Church’s mission is to carry God’s presence and purpose to the world.
- **Old vs. New Covenant:**
 - In the Old Covenant, God’s presence was limited to the temple and priests.
 - The New Covenant brings God’s Spirit into every believer, fulfilling prophecies from Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah.
- **Purpose of the Church:**
 - To set captives free, comfort the brokenhearted, and rebuild what is ruined (Isaiah 61).
 - Believers are now a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2), with direct access to God.
- **Sacred Order in the Church:**
 - Jesus is the head of the Church.
 - Leaders (apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists) equip believers for ministry.
 - Every member is called to serve and use their gifts.
- **Living as the Church:**
 - The Church thrives when all members operate in their gifts.
 - The Spirit’s presence is meant to be active and growing in each believer.
 - The Church’s mission and legacy are passed to each generation.

Application & Reflection:

- **SOAP Method:** Encourages daily study and journaling using Scripture, Observation, Application, and Prayer.
- **Discussion Questions:** Provided throughout to prompt reflection on the meaning and implications of being the Church.
- **Personal Challenge:** Are you living as the temple of the Holy Spirit, or just attending church? Are you passing on the mission and purpose of the Church to the next generation?

Conclusion:

The Church was born at Pentecost and continues to live through believers today. The Holy Spirit empowers, unites, and sends the Church on God’s mission. Each believer is called to live out this reality, not just attend services, but to be the Church in the world.

Section II: Study questions

Understanding the Birth of the Church

1. What does it mean that “God doesn’t want me to go to church, He wants me to be the church”? How does this change your perspective on faith and community?
2. Why is Acts 2 considered the birth of the Church? What happened at Pentecost that was so significant?
3. How was God’s presence experienced before Pentecost, and how did it change after the Holy Spirit came?

Exploring Empowerment and Mission

4. What does “empowerment” mean in the context of the Church? What kind of power did the Holy Spirit bring?
5. How is the Church’s mission described in Isaiah 61? What are the different facets of this mission?
6. What does it mean for the Church to be “sent on a mission”? How is this mission lived out today?

Old Covenant vs. New Covenant

7. What was missing in the Old Covenant that was fulfilled at Pentecost?
8. How does the New Covenant work, according to Jeremiah’s prophecy? What makes it better than the Old?
9. How does God’s Spirit dwelling in believers change the way we relate to God and to each other?

Identity and Purpose of the Church

10. What is the significance of being called a “royal priesthood” in 1 Peter 2? How does this compare to the Old Testament priesthood?
11. What is the “rock” upon which Jesus said He would build His Church? How do you interpret this promise?
12. What is the purpose of gates in Matthew 16, and what does it mean that the gates of Hades will not prevail against the Church?

Living as the Church

13. Are you living as the temple of the Holy Spirit, or merely attending church? What’s the difference?
14. How can you use your gifts to help keep God’s Church on mission?
15. What does it mean to “pass on the Church” to the next generation? How can you do this in practical ways?

Reflection and Application

16. What changes have you witnessed in your life since receiving the Holy Spirit?
17. What benefits does the Church derive from the promises in Isaiah 61? List them.
18. How do you apply the SOAP method (Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer) to deepen your understanding of these passages?

Section III: Complete study notes

Pastor began with a review.

1. What do you remember as the principles that he raised over the last two weeks concerning family?
2. What did you learn, if anything?
3. What was your early church experience?
4. What does this mean, "God doesn't want me to go to church, He wants me to be the church?"
5. What does this mean: "The Church was never meant to be a building. The Church was meant to be us?"
6. When did you first come to this understanding?

Open to Acts 2: **1**When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. **2**Suddenly a sound like a mighty rushing wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. **3**They saw tongues like flames of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. **4**And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Pastor says, "This is the birth of the church."

1. What do you see?
2. Explain what Pastor means by, "This is the birth of the church." Why is this a birth?
3. How many times in the Old Testament had the Spirit come down as "flames of fire"?

Pastor says, "This was the birth of the church, because God reestablished something about His presence and about His purpose. His presence with people and in people, and the purpose of His people. The Church was born when the Holy Spirit descended on His people after Jesus' ascension. Remember, Jesus said, '**7**But I tell you the truth, it is for your benefit that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.' (John 16)

1. How have we benefited more from Jesus' ascension?
2. How is this to our advantage?

Pastor continues, "You have to understand what took place *before* Jesus in order to understand the significance of this moment. Prior to Pentecost, His presence was only in the temple, and could only be ministered through a priest, then Jesus, *God with Us*, God revealed to us in the flesh through the Person of Jesus Christ, which was great...the disciples got to experience the presence of God, but Jesus told them it was advantageous that He should go...because the Father would send us the Holy Spirit. From that day, His presence is no longer confined to a temple or to a single Person, but that Presence would be everywhere because He would fill every person who received Him."

1. Can you explain this in your own words?
2. Would you rather be in Elijah's shoes or Peter's shoes? Explain.
3. Would rather be in Peter's shoes, or your shoes? Explain.

✠ **Pentecost wasn't just an event: It was a divine moment of empowerment that marked the beginning of the Church's mission and God's presence dwelling in His people.**

1. Define empowerment. What changes?
2. What changes have you witnessed?
3. What power can you expect? Natural or supernatural?

4. Explain.

Pastor says, "We cannot divorce these two concepts from each other. He wanted to dwell inside of us...But He also wanted to send us on a mission."

1. What does this mean?
2. How is His dwelling manifested in us?
3. What is His mission?
4. What changes when He takes part?
5. What part did God's divine power play?
6. What part does His power play today?

✠ **Why was the church birthed. What was missing in the Old Covenant?**

Examine Matthew 16: 13 *When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He questioned His disciples: "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"* 14 *They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."* 15 *"But what about you?" Jesus asked. "Who do you say I am?"* 16 *Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* 17 *Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by My Father in heaven. 18And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. 19I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."*

1. Read the passage again as if for the first time. In your own words what is the promise the first apostles are hearing?
2. What is the rock upon which the church is built?
3. If the gates don't prevail against the church, who is attacking whom?
4. Are gates ever the aggressors? Have you ever been attacked by too aggressive gates?
5. Explain the purpose of gates.
6. Who has been held captive behind the gates?
7. What is the result due to gates that collapse? Who is set free?
8. What is revealed of the purpose of the church from this principle?

Pastor says, "God wanted to build something where Hell and Satan's dominion didn't have the ability to thwart God's intention."

1. What does that do to the gates of hell?
2. What does liberty look like for the captives? Do you have a testimony?

Look carefully at God's intention revealed in what, in Luke 4, Jesus quoted of Isaiah 61: 1 *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is on Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to the prisoners, 2to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of our God's vengeance, to comfort all who mourn, 3to console the mourners in Zion—to give them a crown of beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and a garment of praise for a spirit of despair. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.*

1. What do you see?
2. Who is "me" in verse 1?
3. Where are the captives being held? Behind what gates?

4. What chances of survival do the gates have?
5. What happens to those that mourn, who are held captive and who are brokenhearted?
6. What shall they be called?
7. Who gets the glory when we have been transformed in this way?

Now look at the purpose of those who are being so saved: Isaiah 61: 4*They will rebuild the ancient ruins; they will restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations. 5*Strangers will stand and feed your flocks, and foreigners will be your plowmen and vinedressers. 6*But you will be called the priests of the LORD; they will speak of you as ministers of our God; you will feed on the wealth of nations, and you will boast in their riches. 7*Instead of shame, My people will have a double portion, and instead of humiliation, they will rejoice in their share; and so they will inherit a double portion in their land, and everlasting joy will be theirs.

1. How is the church described in Isaiah's terms? Who is "they" in verse 4?
2. In your own words, what is the purpose and duty of the church, as revealed here? List the various facets of that purpose.
3. Who is "you" in verse 6?
4. What benefits does the church derive from these promises. List them.
5. What was missing in the old covenant, that could only take place on Pentecost, to enable the Church to fulfill its mission?
6. How was access gained to God in those days? (Where did the presence of God dwell in those days?)
7. Where is His presence today? Is there anything in this inventory above that we cannot do?
8. Do you wear beauty or ashes? The oil of joy? Or mourning?
9. Who gives us the "crown of beauty?" What can we rightly expect?

✠ **What was reestablished at the birth of the church?**

Look up 1 Corinthians 3: 16*Do you not know that you yourselves are God's temple, and that God's Spirit dwells in you? 17*If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

1. What do you see? What is the first thing that changed?
2. How are we God's temple? Where does He dwell?
3. Is your answer because you sense this? Or because you've been told so?
4. Explain why the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom at the moment of Jesus' death.

Now examine 1 Peter 2: 9*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, to proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. 10*Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

1. What do you see? What else has changed?
2. Do we need to go to a priest to gain access to God? Explain.
3. In what way are we a "royal priesthood?"
4. Compare this to what Isaiah said in verse 6 of his prophecy above.

Jeremiah 31 is quoted by the author of Hebrews in chapter 8: 7*For if that first covenant had been without fault, no place would have been sought for a second. 8*But God found

*fault with the people and said: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. **9**It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, because they did not abide by My covenant, and I disregarded them, declares the Lord. **10**For this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord. **I will put My laws in their minds and inscribe them on their hearts.** And I will be their God, and they will be My people. **11**No longer will each one teach his neighbor or his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest. **12**For I will forgive their iniquities and will remember their sins no more."*

1. What do you see?
2. Compare the Old Covenant with the New according to Jeremiah's prophecy. What fault did God find with the old covenant? What was missing?
3. How does the New Covenant work? What makes it better?
4. Who is our teacher? Why is that better? What are the benefits?
5. Who benefits most from God's presence dwelling in you? Who should benefit most?
6. Why is the promise Jeremiah foretold bad for us teachers? Do you need me?
7. Compare what God told Ezekiel to tell us in chapter 36: **25***I will also sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols. **26**I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you: I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. **27**And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and to carefully observe My ordinances.* Where does the Word get written?
8. How do we come to obey, under the New Covenant?
9. Why is it better? Why is an internal law, inscribed on our heart, better than an external law on tablets of stone?

In this context, review Jesus' promise just before He ascends to heaven for the last time in Acts 1: **7***Jesus replied, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority. **8**But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

1. Where is His temple, the church now located, geographically?
2. What is that power? Now who gets to see this power?
3. How will your neighbors get to see this power?
4. Looking at what was cited above of the prophetic promises, what is included?
5. What can you rightly expect to begin to see in your own life immediately?
6. Pastor asks, "Are you living as the temple of the Holy Spirit, or are you merely attending one?" Answer him.
7. After any particular Sunday, do you say, "I've been to church today?" Or do you say, "I've been the church today?" Explain the difference.
8. What is the difference between coming to church on purpose, and coming to church with purpose? Explain.
9. Can you stop being in church? Can you stop being the church? Explain.

What is God's sacred order in the church?**† We have to realize that Jesus is the head of the church.**

- Pastor says, "As much as it's "nice" to be honored and appreciated, my only job, besides sharing God's word, is to pull you to Jesus. My job is to say, 'He is the one you should be looking at.' I'm here to encourage you...but more to keep pointing you toward Jesus."

† Jesus gave us apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers and evangelists to equip you, the saints, for the work of the ministry.

1. What is the work of the ministry?
2. What was every apostle, prophet or pastor before they became an apostle or a prophet or a pastor?
3. Who taught them to be led by God to become what they became?
4. Where are you today in your training?
5. Where are you headed? Are you equipped and ready to be an evangelist? A prophet?
6. What more will it take for you to be ready?

† The church thrives when every member operates in their gifts.

1. What do you know of Grace's serving workshop? Do you have a testimony?
2. Pastor says, "This is not about filling a bunch of slots so we can get things done." Explain.
3. What is service all about?
4. Looking at the Acts of the apostles, explain how ministry was done in Antioch.
5. How was it done as Paul planted churches in Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica and Corinth? What do you know?
6. How has God made you and equipped you to help keep God's Church on mission? What are we going to carry forward?

† Conclusion: The Church was born two thousand years ago, and still lives in you.

1. Explain.
2. "To the generation that follows, you have the power and the privilege of passing on the Church, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, understanding the purpose of God and the mission of God." What do you see?
3. Pastor adds, "When the Spirit fell on the Church that first day, they gathered in unity. Imagine what the Spirit of God can do on the day that we establish that unity." What do you see?
4. "The Church lives on through you and me. The Spirit is alive in you and Me." To what degree?
5. Is that degree stagnant? Or increasing?
6. How do you know?
7. "You and I are the church. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead resides in me." What do you foresee? Now... ***Take the time to pray for each other.***

Follow up application:

1. Use the [Soap study below](#) to pursue your own understanding.
2. List the benefits of the coming of the Holy Spirit, as clarified in the prophecies reviewed in these notes. Pray to receive each.

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: Acts 2:1-4 Tuesday: John 16:5-7 Wednesday: Matthew 16:17-19 Thursday: Isaiah 61:1-3 Friday: Isaiah 61:4-6 Saturday: Isaiah 61:7 Sunday: 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

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.