

Life Group Notes 12/14/2025 Mark Warren

The Stars are Brightly Shining Week 3

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, 12/14, the third Sunday in advent. 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.

Footnotes are added to supply detail, and to enhance the study. Use at your discretion, and know any questions are welcomed. This week's footnotes cover:

1. [On losing faith.](#)

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

Concise Summary

- **Theme:** God's promises are greater than human failings, and His faithfulness is not limited by our past, family history, or personal mistakes. The study explores how biblical prophecy, especially Balaam's, foretells Christ as the "star" who brings hope and redemption, regardless of darkness or brokenness in our lives.
- **Key Points:**
 - **Testimony and History:** Personal testimonies are encouraged, highlighting how Jesus' power and reality are proven through history and fulfilled promises.
 - **Faith and Salvation:** Salvation is rooted in Christ's faithfulness, not our own. Even when we struggle with unbelief, God remains faithful to His promises.
 - **Prophecy:** The value of prophecy lies in God's Word, not the prophet. Prophecies about Jesus, such as Balaam's, were fulfilled despite imperfect messengers.

- **God's Grace:** God's grace is evident in the lineage of David, showing that even great failures do not cancel God's promises. Repentance and grace restore and rebuild.
- **Transformation:** Christ transforms us and can work through us to impact others. Our weaknesses create space for God's strength and glory.
- **Practical Application:** Participants are encouraged to reflect on promises God has made, pray for their fulfillment, and consider how they can make a difference in others' lives
- **Reflection:** The notes emphasize that God writes perfect stories through imperfect people, and our failures can become part of our testimony. The SOAP method is suggested for deeper personal study throughout the week.

Section II: Study questions

Opening Reflection

1. **Rob's Testimony:** What stood out to you in Rob's testimony? How do personal stories help us understand God's power and reality?
2. **Your Story:** Do you have a testimony of how God's promises have impacted your life? Would you be willing to share?

Exploring Faith and God's Promises

3. **Proof of God's Promises:** Can you think of examples—biblical or personal—where God's promises proved greater than human failings?
4. **Faithfulness:** According to 2 Timothy 2:11-13, what does it mean that "if we lose faith, He remains faithful"? How does this encourage you?
5. **Source of Salvation:** Are we saved by our own faith, or by Jesus' faith in the promise He made to us? How does Galatians 2:20 shape your answer?

Prophecy and Fulfillment

6. **Balaam's Prophecy:** What is the significance of Balaam's prophecy about a "star coming forth from Jacob"? Why does it matter that this was spoken 1,500 years before Christ?
7. **Prophet vs. Prophecy:** What matters more—the prophet or the prophecy? How do imperfect messengers still deliver God's perfect Word?

Grace and Redemption

8. **David's Lineage:** How does the story of David's family, including his failures, show that God's promises are not canceled by our mistakes?
9. **Repentance and Restoration:** What does the promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 teach us about God's grace and restoration?

Application and Transformation

10. **Transformation:** Mark says, "Christ is telling us, 'Not only am I going to transform you, but transformation can also come through you.'" What does this mean for your life and relationships?
11. **Family Tree:** When you believe God cannot use you, how does remembering Jesus' family tree change your perspective?
12. **Promises Yet to Be Fulfilled:** What promises has God made to you that you are still waiting to see fulfilled? How can you pray and act toward their fulfillment?

Closing Reflection

13. **Grace in Weakness:** How does your weakness create space for God's strength and glory? Can you share an example?

14. Hope and Redemption: Where do you need hope today? How can the group support you in prayer and encouragement?

Section III: Complete study notes

Pastor Mark began by inviting Rob's testimony.

1. Do you remember?
2. What did you see in his testimony?
3. Do you have a testimony?
4. By what historic event was Jesus' power to break all the powers of the enemy manifested most effectively?
5. How do we know from history that He has that power? Did He ever die again?
6. How do we know that Jesus is real and not religion?

God's promises are greater than our failings.

1. Do you have any proof of this?
2. Look at what Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:¹¹*This is a trustworthy saying: If we died with Him, we will also live with Him; ¹²if we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He will also deny us; ¹³if we lose faith, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.* What do you see?
3. Read [footnote 1, below](#). What do you notice? Can Jesus stop believing?
4. Are you saved by your faith? Or are you saved by Jesus' faith in the promise He made you?
5. Look at Galatians 2:20 *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me...* KJV Now answer that question again: Are you saved by your faith? Or are you saved by Jesus' faith in the promise He made, intentionally, with you in His mind?
6. Look at what Paul told the Philippians in chapter 1: Philippians 1:³*I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴In every prayer for all of you, I always pray with joy, ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.* Who is doing the work in us?

Now look up Balaam's third prophecy in Numbers 24:¹⁵*Then Balaam lifted up an oracle, saying, "This is the prophecy of Balaam son of Beor, the prophecy of a man whose eyes are open, ¹⁶the prophecy of one who hears the words of God, who has knowledge from the Most High, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who bows down with eyes wide open: ¹⁷I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come forth from Jacob, and a scepter will arise from Israel. He will crush the skulls of Moab and strike down all the sons of Sheth.*

1. Knowing this was pronounced c. 1500 years before Christ, what do you see?
2. What do you know of Balaam's character?
3. What matters more? The prophet or the prophecy?
4. Explain. What do we know of prophets? What do we know of God's Word?
5. Which of the two passes away? Prophets or prophecy?
6. Which abides forever? Explain.
7. Who is Jacob? Who is Israel?
8. Why does he have two names? Who gave him the nickname?

9. Look at Matthew 1:¹*This is the record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham: ²Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.* What star came out of Jacob?

10. Why is this important?

11. Mark points out that Balaam was a prophet for profit. Does that change the value of the Word he spoke? Why not?

12. Is the purpose of prophecy to extol the prophet? Or to open the door unto God's purposes ahead?

13. How does prophecy prepare the way of the Lord?

14. Why is it that Balaam was not able to curse Israel

✠ **God keeps His promises despite the darkness.**

Pastor prophesies, "Sometimes we feel like our failures, or our family tree, or the darkness of the world is somehow more powerful than God's promises, but I want to say that God's promises will always come to pass.

1. How do we know this?

2. On Whose faith is a prophetic promise made?

3. In Genesis 1, how did God know light would be, once He spoke the Word? What was the chance of failure, that light would not become?

Look up 1 Peter 1:²²*Since you have purified your souls by obedience to the truth so that you have a genuine love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from a pure heart. ²³For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴For "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, ²⁵but the word of the Lord stands forever."* And this is the word that was proclaimed to you.

1. What do you see?

2. What is the effect of obedience?

3. What does love do?

4. What is the seed?

5. What do we know of the promise of God?

6. How does a trustworthy promise change your attitude?

7. Think of this: Did the story begin with a stable, a virgin, a wise man or a promise?

8. Has the story deviated at all since the promise was first made? Why is this important?

✠ **The shocking part: God chose David's broken line.**

1. What do you know of David's lineage?

2. What do you know of David's own mistakes?

3. What do you know of Bathsheba and her husband Uriah?

4. Describe the grace of God extended to David. Who was Solomon's mother?

Look closely at the promise God made to David by Nathan the prophet before David ever saw Bathsheba: 2 Samuel 7:¹²*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. ¹³He will build a house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴I 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. ¹⁶Your house and kingdom will endure forever before Me, and your throne will be established forever."

1. What do you see?
2. Just how sure are the "Sure Mercies of David?" Why?
3. What matters more to history and to us, the prophet or the prophecy?
4. Did the promise depend on David's faith? Or God's intention?
5. Mark says, "God's promise is rooted in His faithfulness, not in human perfection." Explain this?
6. How does David's line prove this is true?
7. Mark says, "If you knew my own book of failures, you would know that there is no way I should be standing before you, and yet God chose me." Can you relate? Do you have a similar story?
8. Explain this verse from Romans 5: ²⁰*The law came in so that the trespass would increase; but where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ²¹so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* How is grace manifested?
9. What does righteousness look like?
10. Who benefits from our righteousness? How is our family changed?
11. Mark says, "Christ is telling us, 'Not only am I going to transform you, but transformation can also come through you.'" Explain.

✠ **When you believe God cannot use you—Remember Jesus' family tree.**

1. He continues, "If Jesus comes despite His family tree, how much more can He use you?" Do you agree?
2. Are we saved by our own faith? Or by Christ's faith in the Promise He made us to save us?
3. What promises has He made you? What has yet to be fulfilled?

Look up 1 Corinthians 1: ²⁶*Brothers, consider the time of your calling: Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were powerful; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸He chose the lowly and despised things of the world, and the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, ²⁹so that no one may boast in His presence.*

1. Explain God's choice.
2. Why do the weak displace the strong, the least displace the greatest, and the last displace the first?
3. Why does the child come first?
4. How does this make you feel?
5. Look at God's motivation for the choices He made. What is our boast?
6. Discuss these points made by Mark: "God's promises are not limited by your past; God's plan is not blocked by your failures, God's purposes are not canceled by your family story."

Pastor says, "If God could include adulterers, murderers, prostitutes (Rahab was in that line of work), who told you that God cannot use you?"

1. Answer Mark's question.
2. Are you beginning to see usefulness ahead?

3. What will it take? What needs to change?
4. Imagine life with no addiction. Do you have a testimony?

✠ **God's faithfulness is stronger than your failures.**

Pastor goes on, "Your history does not disqualify you from God's destiny. If anything your weakness creates a space for His strength. Your vulnerability creates a space for His glory, and your past creates a place for His redemption."

1. What do you see?
2. Have you ever thought otherwise? Explain.
3. Look up 1 John 1: ⁸*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar, and His word is not in us.* What steps do you take? What motivates you?
4. What steps has God already taken? What was His motivation?

✠ **Practical steps: Where do you need hope today?**

1. "If you think your family background disqualifies you, divorce, addiction, dysfunction, whatever...know that the good news has that in His family line." He was qualified as the Son of Adam...His humanity qualified Him to complete His Work so we could join him and become co-laborers with Him. "God can bring redemption not just to you, but through you." Explain.
2. "When your past sins whisper, 'God is done with you,' David's greatest failures did not define Him, and God's promises, His sure and promised mercies, could not be impacted by David's failures. They were 'new every morning.' David needed to repent, and God's promise continued through David's line. Repentance restores, grace restores, God rebuilds. This is the hope for you and me today. When you feel like God's promises are delayed, remember it took 1400 years for the promise made through Balaam to be fulfilled. What God is doing through you today, the generations that come will be able to see it. By Rob's testimony today, his family tree has been changed. His wife and family and each subsequent generation will know the results." What do you see?
3. Christ is the star that shines in our darkness. Review Isaiah 60: ¹*Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. ²For behold, darkness covers the earth, and thick darkness is over the peoples; but the LORD will rise upon you, and His glory will appear over you. ³Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.* How have nations come to the light that the church brought them?

Considering these ideas, reflect on this:

1. How is this God's purpose for the church?
2. Pastor says, "God writes perfect stories through imperfect people." How does He do this?
3. How have your own failures become a part of your testimony?
4. Look at Jeremiah 33: ²*Thus says the LORD who made the earth, the LORD who formed it and established it, the LORD is His name: ³Call to Me, and I will answer and show you great and unsearchable things you do not know.* Is there anything you do not know or understand?

5. What is the Lord telling you to do today?
6. Look how David responded in Psalm 51: *¹⁶For You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; You take no pleasure in burnt offerings. ¹⁷The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.* What do you bring to the table?
7. What does He bring in return?
8. Here's what Jesus said His purpose was when he was in the synagogue in Nazareth, from Isaiah 61: *¹He 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.* What can you anticipate from these promises?

Take the time to pray.

Follow up application:

1. Use the **Soap study below** to pursue your own understanding.
 2. List promises you know God has made concerning you. Pray each promise out loud, that it be fulfilled according to His Word.
 3. For whom were you saved? List people in whose lives you can make a difference, and start to pray to that end.
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Footnotes:

1. **On losing faith**—The biblical concept of faith became obfuscated when the language of Christendom switched from Greek to Latin. Latin, like English, has two words associated with the concept of faith: *fides*, “faith,” and *credo*, “I believe.” Greek has no such dichotomy, and every iteration of the word “faith,” πίστις, *pistis*, or πιστεύω, *pisteuo*, “to believe,” comes from its root, πείθω, *peitho*, “to persuade/convince.” Faith, then, πίστις/*pistis*, is a state of unwavering persuasion. As the church became the dominant political/religious force in the empire, religion began to replace relationship, and an argument developed that still plagues the church today, that “faith” is different from “belief,” although all acknowledge the biblical truth that “unbelief,” ἀπίστις, *apistis*, “unbelief/doubt,” is the opposite of faith. This leaves us with an untenable absurdity, that one can “believe in God,” and yet not have “enough” faith. Faith is not a quantifiable substance. It is a state of persuasion. If one wants more faith, one believes more stuff. In the biblical sense...one clings to more promises, fully persuaded that what He has promised He will also do. One believes, or one hears Jesus call us “unbelieving.” As we grow in our understanding we become more and more aware of the fact that **NOTHING** depends on *our* faith. We are not even saved by our faith. Paul explained to the Galatians in chapter 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh **I live by the faith of the Son of God**, who loved me, and gave himself for me... (Note: The KJV, rare in English translations, caught whose faith is operating in our lives:

Jesus believed in the promise He made, and therefore died to fulfill His part of the deal. His faith working in us produces His righteousness in us. I am saved because He believed, and called me.) Paul confirmed this principle to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:¹²For this reason, even though I suffer as I do, I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him for that day. Notice, He/Jesus is able to keep what was entrusted to Him. (Note: Paul's faith was a decision he made in light of the faith of Christ toward him. What Paul refers to as the "gift of faith" in 1 Corinthians 12 is absolutely Christ's faith offered and always available toward us, and completely independent of our own current state of unbelief.) Look how clearly he puts it in 2 Timothy 2:¹¹*This is a trustworthy saying: If we died with Him, we will also live with Him; ¹²if we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He will also deny us; ¹³if we lose faith, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.* The Greek is more clear: Where in English Paul speaks of "losing faith," the Greek says "ἀπιστοῦμεν," *apistoumen*, we become unbelieving...and He keeps on believing. God cannot stop believing the promise He has spoken. Romans 10 explains the process, "Faith comes by hearing." Faith comes in the form of a promise, seed-like, which, if received in good soil, becomes a thought, then a thought-process, then a concept and a lifestyle. This is how Christian faith is born of the Word. Paul told the Philippians in chapter 1:³*I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴In every prayer for all of you, I always pray with joy, ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.* Their faith walk began the day Paul walked into town with the Word of God in obedience to a night vision he had in Troas. Our salvation is not dependent on our faith. It is dependent on the faith Jesus had in the joy that was set before him, that enabled Him to endure the cross...seeing us, our salvation as the outcome of His faith. Now read John 17, and understand the degree of Faith Jesus has in the outcome of your own salvation.

For further study:

Take a moment each day this week to apply the **SOAP method** (Scripture—Copy the scripture. / Observation—Write what you see. / Application—Write what God is saying. / Prayer—Write what your response is.) to some of the scripture we looked at this week:

Monday: Numbers 24:15-17
Tuesday: 2 Timothy 2:11-13
Wednesday: Galatians 2:20 KJV
Thursday: 2 Timothy 1:10-12
Friday: Philippians 1:3-6
Saturday: 1 Peter 1:22-25
Sunday: 2 Samuel 7:12-16

10/05/2025

Sermon Life Group Notes Mark Warren Sacred Order Week 1

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.