

Life Group Notes 12/31/2023
Pastor Mark Warren New Year's Freedom

[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, 12/31. 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 footnotes include:

1. [On the YouVersion of the Bible, the Bible app.](#)
2. [On discipline in the Old Testament.](#)

*****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 the message with a prophecy: "2024 is going to be the year you look back and say, 'Wow. God did something amazing in 2024.'"

1. Have you heard this from others?
2. What predictions have you heard?
3. Have you heard anything of 2024 on your own? Do you have a testimony?
4. What purpose does predicting/foreseeing serve? When do you listen and when do you ignore predictions?
5. Have you ever taken steps due to a prediction you heard? How did that turn out?

Pastor continues, "This year is going to require you to be all in, because what's at stake is your freedom."

1. Explain.
2. What will it take from you to be "all in?"

He says, "The enemy has one strategy, and that is to kill, steal and destroy. The answer is to apply our minds to seeking freedom. We are going to take back what the enemy has stolen. People who are in bondage cannot see that they are in bondage, because they have never known the freedom on the other side."

1. Discuss this. Is it true?

2. Look up John 8: [31](#)So He said to the Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, you are truly My disciples. [32](#)Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” [33](#)“We are Abraham’s descendants,” they answered. “We have never been slaves to anyone. How can You say we will be set free?” [34](#)Jesus replied, “Truly, truly, I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. [35](#)A slave is not a permanent member of the family, but a son belongs to it forever. [36](#)So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. What do you see?
3. In what way does the freedom Jesus offers differ from the freedom you have known in 2023?
4. How could 2024 be different, based on these verses?
5. What’s the difference between “free” and “free indeed?”
6. Is a slave a member of the household?
7. How does his membership differ from that of a son?
8. Which status do you choose?

Pastor Mark relates how he built a bonfire for his records from the days in business. He says, “There is nothing wrong with wealth, or accumulating wealth.”

1. If that’s true, then what’s the problem? What is the root of all evil?
2. How do you learn how to be a good steward to your accumulating wealth.
3. Look at Matthew 25: [28](#)Therefore take the talent from him and give it to the one who has ten talents. [29](#)For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. But the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. [30](#)And throw that worthless servant into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ Explain what you see.
4. What is the penalty for faulty stewardship?
5. How are we doing with this idea of stewardship?
6. Compare this to what Jesus told his disciples previously in Matthew 13: [11](#)He replied, “The knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. [12](#) Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. [13](#)This is why I speak to them in parables: ‘Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.’ What is accumulating and what taken away here?
7. Now look at Luke 8: [17](#)For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be made known and brought to light. [18](#)Pay attention, therefore, to how you listen. Whoever has will be given more, but whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken away from him. What do you see? What is accumulating here?
8. What is real wealth in Kingdom terms?
9. How can you be poor in the world’s terms and rich in the Kingdom’s?
10. Do you remember the parable of the four soils? How does that apply here?
11. Which soil received seed? What does the good soil do with the seed?
12. Looking at these parables, why does Jesus say, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear...” so often?

Pastor recollects that when he was accumulating wealth, with it he was accumulating an incredible amount of debt, and increasing stress in the family. That is when he realized he was not free. He says, "I wasn't living the American dream, I was living the American nightmare."

1. What advice would you have given him?
2. Would you have followed your own advice? What if the incredible amount of wealth you accumulated was truly incredible, even in your own eyes? Would you still have followed your advice? How easy does a camel pass through the eye of a needle?
3. Pastor says, "You cannot see what you haven't yet experienced." Have you experienced freedom? Do you have a testimony?
4. If you have not experienced freedom, what expectations do you have?
5. Look [above at John 8](#) again. How does one gain freedom?
6. What does it mean to "dwell" or "abide"?
7. Where do you dwell?
8. How long do you suppose you should abide before attaining freedom?
9. Why is that question almost absurd? When do you leave your abode?

Look up Matthew 11: [25](#)At that time Jesus declared, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. [26](#)Yes, Father, for this was well-pleasing in Your sight. [27](#)All things have been entrusted to Me by My Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him. [28](#)Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. [29](#)Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [30](#)For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

1. Unto whom is wisdom given?
2. From whom is it withheld?
3. Where do you fit?
4. Look at Proverbs 25: [2](#)It is the glory of God to conceal a matter and the glory of kings to search it out. Where do you fit? What are you doing right now?
5. According to what Jesus said above in Matthew 11, where did God conceal wisdom?
6. Why do the "wise" not find wisdom? Where are they searching?
7. Why do children understand better than the wise?
8. How does an "easy yoke" and a "light burden" relate to freedom?

Pastor says, "Freedom starts with a decision to be free. Make the decision to walk out from here declaring, "2024 is my year of freedom. I will find rest and freedom for my soul, and I will greater freedom than I have ever known was possible, because I'm going to do it His way."

1. Have you done that?
2. Take the moment to pray together and affirm this decision.
3. Find a partner to pray with.

4. Look up Galatians 5: *1It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not be encumbered once more by a yoke of slavery.* What does Paul say was the purpose and goal of Christ's action? Did Christ succeed yet? Will He?
5. According to Paul here, who ultimately decides what yoke you will put on?
6. Explain.
7. Mark says, "If you're yoking yourself to the world, the world will bring you somewhere." Explain.

He continues, "If you get healthy physically, you get healthy mentally. If you get healthy mentally, you get healthy spiritually. All aspects of our well-being are linked together." Look up 3 John 1: *2Beloved, I pray that in every way you may prosper and enjoy good health, as your soul also prospers.* What prospers under freedom? For what benefit exactly is John praying on our behalf? Pastor asks, "How is it that, as participants begin to apply the principles in Financial Peace University they experience a deeper relationship with God?" Answer him.

1. How does careful stewardship bring peace?
2. What is the expected fruit of good stewardship?
3. How can increasing stewardship bring even greater peace?
4. Who benefits, besides the steward, from good stewardship?
5. Review 2 Peter 1: *5For this very reason (the many precious promises whereby we become partakers of the divine nature), make every effort to add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; 6and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8For if you possess these qualities and continue to grow in them, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9But whoever lacks these traits is nearsighted to the point of blindness, having forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.* What is the relationship between character growth and fruitfulness? How is growth a decision we are required to make? What does stagnation breed?

Mark forewarns us, "The journey of freedom is not going to be easy. It will require the '3 Ds of freedom.'"

- Discipline
 - Devotion
 - Determination
1. Explain. Define each. Where do they fit in Peter's principle of progressive growth, stated above?
 2. How is each vital to our freedom? (For example, how do "devotion" and "dwelling/abiding" relate?)
 3. Name the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5: *22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*) How are these three "Ds" derived from His fruit? Review Philippians 2: *12Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now even more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. 13For it is God who works in you to will and*

to act on behalf of His good purpose. How is this endeavor dependent on cooperation with the Holy Spirit?

Mark points out that the root of the word “**discipline**” is “disciple,” whom we’ve been commissioned to make. He says, “In this, I’m choosing the narrow path. I am not choosing the wide path.” You know that that narrow path is going to lead to places of freedom. Look at Proverbs 1: [1](#)Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.

1. Explain.
2. See [footnote 2 below](#). How do “discipline” and “chastisement” work together?
3. Explain the concept of “self-discipline.”
4. Mark asks, “If the path of discipline is the path that leads to freedom, why is it the road less traveled? Why is this the narrow way?” Answer him.
5. Jesus says, “I am the way.” How does that relate to what Mark is saying?
6. What is the hardest part of any project you want to undertake?
7. Why is starting a project so difficult? Look at Ecclesiastes 7: [8](#)The end of a matter is better than the beginning, and a patient spirit is better than a proud one. Explain.
8. Why does it help to have a patient spirit?

Mark looks at **devotion**. He says, “You’re not going to go anywhere if you are not rooted in Jesus. The Holy Spirit has a way of pinpointing issues in our lives. With the Holy Spirit, you will be empowered to set aside hindrances and He will guide you into all truth.” Review what Jesus said in John 14: [16](#)And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate to be with you forever— [17](#)the Spirit of truth. The world cannot receive Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you do know Him, for He abides with you and will be in you. [18](#)I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

1. What is the promise here.
2. As we abide in His Word, and are His disciples indeed, Who abides with us?
3. Think of what we learned above, “...To him who has, more will be given.” How does that apply here?
4. How does this verse apply? James 4:8 [8](#)Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. How well does this verse define devotion? Is anything missing?
5. Pastor says, “This is going to require humility.” Explain.
6. He says, “I put myself into a place where I become the student to learn.” Where does that put you?

He looks at **determination**.

1. He says, we have to put the possibility of failure away from our plans. How many times have you begun a discipline and failed?
2. Have you ever begun a discipline, quit a habit, and you can now begin to say you have succeeded? Do you have a testimony?
3. How does success build anticipation for further success?

Look at James 1: [5](#)Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. [6](#)But he must ask in faith, without doubting, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. [7](#)That man should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. [8](#)He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

1. What do you see?

2. Review above. Where does proverbs say wisdom comes from? Proverbs 4: *"⁴Let your heart lay hold of my words; keep my commands and you will live. ⁵Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or turn from them. ⁶Do not forsake wisdom, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will guard you."* How does this relate to "abiding in His Word and being His disciple?"
3. Why is doubt the opposite of faith? What part does doubt play in faith?
4. Why is this sentence nonsense: "I tried that 'faith' thing?" Can you "try" faith?
5. What part does determination play in biblical faith?
6. If your faith is entirely based on a promise God made, how will your actions, devotion and mindset be affected by that faith?
7. According to James, does God say, "No." Where does the "no" actually come from?
8. In what areas are you double-minded? What steps can you take to be free from doublemindedness?
9. Why does pastor say, "Don't go half in?"
10. Explain now what pastor means, "Freedom begins with a decision to be free." Does double-mindedness play a role?

Mark asks, "What does freedom look like for you?"

1. Answer him.
2. What changes?
3. What goes away?
4. What is added?
5. What does it look like to be free from fearing what others think?
6. What does it look like to be free from guilt and shame?
7. What does it look like to be free from substances and toxic relationships?
8. What does it look like to be free from pornography and from relationships that have you bound?
9. If 2024 is the year of greater freedom, what will it look like for you? What decision do you make today?

The Follow-up Application

1. Use the [SOAP journal studies](#) below throughout the week.
2. Pick a plan and read through the Bible in 2024.
3. Sign up for Financial Peace University if you have not yet already.
4. Subscribe to GCC's 21 days of prayer and fasting, January 8-28.
5. Make the decision: "2024 is my year of freedom." List your expectations. Begin to log changes.

Take the time to pray.

Scribe's Notes:

1. **On the YouVersion of the Bible, the Bible app**—There is an app in the app store called the "Bible App." It is the "YouVersion" of the Bible, and it's free if you let it be, and you can donate to one of the best ministries out there. Not only does it contain hundreds of different translations in dozens

of languages, many connected to audible tracks so you can listen as well as read, but it also offers dozens of different reading plans that will track your progress through the Bible throughout the course of that plan.

2. **On discipline in the Old Testament**—The book of Proverbs speaks a lot about discipline and the necessity for it. The Hebrew word for discipline is מוּסָר (*musar*) which means discipline, chastening or correcting. It is translated in the Old Testament variously as chastening (3), chastise (1), correction (3), discipline (18), disciplines (1), instruction (20), punishment (2), reproof (1), warning (1). It is “discipline in the school of wisdom.” What’s important to note is the cooperative nature between the disciple and the teacher. Where the fear of the Lord is only the beginning of wisdom, wisdom begins where the fear of the consequences of an action and the resultant correction are brought into consideration before the action takes place. It becomes easy to understand, then, how the love born of this consideration, once perfected, drives out all fear along with the thought of committing an act that would displease our Love.

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 10:9-11
Tuesday: John 8:31-36
Wednesday: Matthew 25:28-30
Thursday: Matthew 13:11-13
Friday: Luke 8:17-18
Saturday: Proverbs 12:1-2
Sunday: Matthew 11:25-30

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.