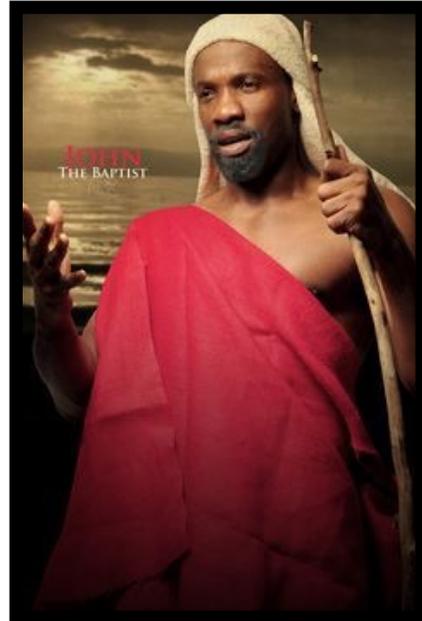
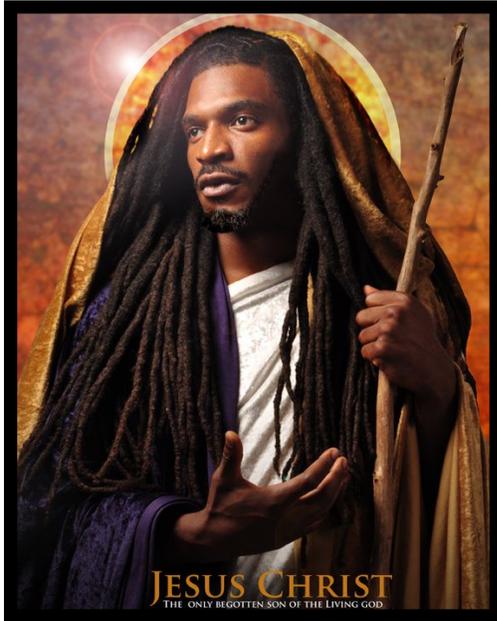


**Lesson #1: The Better You Know God
the More Effective You Will Be in Your Role:
Making My Calling and Election Sure**



***The Marks of a Christian: I Want to Know You More
Mid-Week Bible Study: Wednesday evening 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.***

**Teacher: Rev. Ralph Basui Watkins, DMin, PhD
Interim Pastor**



Wheat Street Baptist Church

359 Auburn Avenue

Atlanta, GA 30312

“God’s mighty fortress on Auburn Avenue where the doors swing back on welcome hinges.”

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The Marks of a Christian: I Want to Know You More
Mid-Week Bible Study: Wednesday evening 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.
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Focus Text:

Philippians 3:8-11 New King James Version (NKJV)

8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ **9** and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; **10** that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, **11** if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Course Description:

In this ten week Bible Study series we will engage the Gospel according to Mark. As we study this pivotal book of the Bible we will be focusing on our walk with God. How do we become more like Jesus? How do we use our faith as a resource to deal with the things we face in everyday life? How does Jesus' model of ministry inform my life and how we as a church are to be the church? How can I grow in my faith and be closer to Jesus, family and friends as I seek to be a witness for the Kingdom. This will be an interactive time of engaging scripture, culture and conversation. Come and learn with us as we grow together to be the Christians and church God has called Wheat Street to be in the 21st century.

Introduction:

How bad do you want know God?

Philippians 3:8-11 New King James Version (NKJV)

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- To know God means we loss something to gain a relationship with God.
- What have you loss and what are you willing to loss to know Christ more?
- To know God means there is a degree of suffering
- What are we willing to suffer to know God more?
- When we know God we gain a "righteousness through faith" - what does this mean? What does it look like?

This is the part of this verse that moves me:

10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, **11** if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

- That I may know God and the power of His resurrection
- Fellowship of his sufferings
- Being conformed to His death

*Clip from Movie: The Color of the Cross

How close do you want to be to God?

How do you know you are close to God?



What are the top five signs of what a person who is close to God:

1. Looks like?
2. Acts like?
3. Walks like?
4. How do they serve?
5. Why do they serve?
6. How do they show love to others?
7. How do they work with people inside and outside the church?
8. How do they live out their role(s) in the church?
9. How do they share power?
10. How do they restrain themselves?

We have historically rewarded folks in the church for presence, giving and serving. These have been the three signs that one is committed to God as a mature follower of Christ.

1. Regular attendance
2. Regular giving
3. Regular service

Should this be the sole or primary barometer of what it means to be a Christian?

What should those signs of Christian maturity be for us at Wheat Street?

To Know God is to Be Like Jesus and a part of this is that it brings clarity in your calling and how to operate in that calling.

We are equal in essence yet different in function!

No one is higher or better than the other.

Jesus and John: The Dynamic Duo

Mark 1:1-8

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. **2** As it is written in the Prophets:

“Behold, I send My messenger before Your face,
Who will prepare Your way before You.”

3

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord;

Make His paths straight.”

4 John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. **5** Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

6 Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. **7** And he preached, saying, “There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. **8** I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

John’s Role:

As this story opens up we see John doing what John had been called to do, prepare the way. John is portrayed as one crying in the wilderness. This is significant because what we see right away from John and the upcoming ministry of Jesus is that it will be different.

The teachers in the synagogue sat in long flowing robes and taught boasting of their righteousness. Here comes John crying and not dressed in a robe. *We see right away there is something distinctly different about John, his teaching and this messiah he is preaching about.*

Key Point: John has left the comforts of his home and tradition to do what God has called him to do!

What is John preaching?

1. A baptism of repentance - John came preaching a baptism of repentance. Repentance prepares us to receive the good news Jesus brings. A change of heart and mind allows us to let go of old ways of life, old burdens and wrongs, and to know that we are forgiven as we seek to follow Christ. As we open ourselves up to following we Christ we become open to God's remaking us, changing us and transforming us. Note: The church can't change and grow and if we will not change. **Sliding over and changing seats!!!! This doesn't mean sitting out!**
2. Confessing sins - John calls them to confess their sins. This is major in John's ministry, the ministry of Jesus Christ and God's church. We must, on a regular basis, confess our sins by calling them out. When we name our sins, confess them, and repent we stand in the pathway of change and transformation. Sin is what keeps us out of the will of God. Sin separates or creates distance between our being squarely in the will of God versus doing our own thing in God's name.

John knew God and subsequently understood the call God had placed on his life. The closer we get to God the more clarity we receive from God about our role / call because we are able to hear from God.

How do we hear:

1. By spending time with God in private personal ways such as:
 1. In prayer (as it fits in our life / routine)
 2. In study
 3. Reading God's word (we can focus on small parts of the Bible)
2. Engaging the preached word
3. Engaging the taught word
4. Being fully engaged in worship and expecting to moved and changed
5. In meditation / focused on hearing from God
6. Fasting (always consult your doctor)
7. Quiet time
8. Stillness
9. Serving God by serving others
10. Finding those places, spaces and means by which God communicates with you

Ministry is About Team: We are called to serve together!

Mark 1:14-20

Jesus Begins His Galilean Ministry

14 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom[a] of God, **15** and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

Four Fishermen Called as Disciples

16 And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. **17** Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." **18** They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

19 When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also *were* in the boat mending their nets. **20** And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.

God calls them, like John, to leave the comfort of what they know and have been doing.

To leave what one knew doesn't mean that what they formally did will not serve them well in the future. What they did will inform what they do.

The fact that they have been fishermen will help them understand what it is to fish for people.

Fishermen / women don't ask fish to come them but rather they leave the dock and go to where the fish are. They go into the deep waters and find the fish. They don't wait for fish or complain about the fish that they haven't caught but rather they go and get the fish and bring them back home.

What does this mean for us?

What does it mean for Wheat Street to go fishing?

What do we have to leave if we hope to grow and reach the greater Atlanta metro-area with the word of God / liberating / freeing Gospel of Christ?

We are called to preach! We were sent here to

Mark 1:35-39

Preaching in Galilee

35 Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. **36** And Simon and those *who were* with Him searched for Him. **37** When they found Him, they said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You."

38 But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth."

39 And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.

- He went away to Pray - if we are going to know God and know God's will for our life we have to spend sometime in prayer. This does not have to be long morning prayers but rather it is the way prayer works best in your life and routine.
- The people were searching for him and Simon and his companions are bringing him a complaint. He doesn't answer the complaint. When you are doing what you are supposed to be doing don't waste time answering unfounded complaints about what you are doing. Jesus had just gotten up from prayer and he knew what was next. Instead of spending time answering their complaints he said, "Let us go...."

- Jesus proceeds to go to the next town to preach and he let's them know that he is going to do what he was sent to do.
 - First, Jesus knew what he was called to do because he spent time with the Father. You find at every turn in his ministry he spends time with the Father for clarity and direction. This is his alone time with the Father. We have to have some alone time with God.
 - Second, Jesus didn't spend time doing what he wasn't called to do. Jesus was about doing that which he was called to do and the more we do what we are called to do the clearer we become about that thing we are called to do.

No one is called to do everything and the person who tries to do everything will end up doing nothing well. It is important for us to have a sense of clarity about our call / work so that we can focus and do that thing which God created us for at this time in our life.

What are you called to do at this point in your life?

How are you making your calling and election sure?

How do you know when you have heard from God and then know what to do next?

Are you doing what God is has called you to do? How do you know?

Note: The worst place to be is out of the will of God!

Next Week:

Dealing with the Difficult Stuff in Your Life: Spring Cleaning

Mark 1:9-13; 1:21-34; 1:40-45