



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V22 N28 July 26, 2020

KING JESUS

“Getting Lost in the Law”

Mark 2:23-3:6

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Kindness-Goodness

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

“Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for every-one else.”

1 Thessalonians 5:15



Did Jesus violate the Sabbath laws?

The Mosaic Law was given to direct people to do what is right, namely, to do what is good. In fact, Jesus reduced all the commandments in the law – thought by Jewish tradition to number 613 – to just two. When asked to identify the greatest commandment, Jesus replies: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Mt 10:37-40; cf., Lk 10:27). So when Jesus asks the Pharisees, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” they know the answer, even though they respond in silence (Mk 3:4).

Ironically, Pharisaic interpretation of the law as expressed in their traditions often did not serve the original purpose of the law. For example, on one occasion Jesus says to the Pharisees, “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’ But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is *Corban* (that is, devoted to God) – then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother. Thus *you nullify the word of God by your tradition* that you have handed down. And you do many things like that” (Mk 7:9-13, italics added).

If you are unfamiliar with the tradition regarding “*Corban*,” read what one commentator writes: “God commands children to honor their parents, and in Jewish tradition that entails more than showing them respect. It also requires providing them with physical necessities. In the case example, the Pharisees would allow a son to duck that responsibility by informing his parents that what support they might expect from him is ‘*Corban*,’ dedicated to God, and therefore it cannot be touched to help them. ‘*Corban*’ was a dedicatory formula used in setting aside property for God and barred one from gaining profit from it. It only expressed an intention

to give property and not its actual disposal. From Jesus’ point of view, the command from the Decalogue to honor parents soars above the command to honor vows. The Pharisees’ tradition turned the law on its head by insisting that the sanctity of the vow superseded the parent’s right to support. The son can say to his parents that he cannot offer them any help because he has dedicated to God everything that could help them. He could claim that doing so would be a sin against God” (David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary: Mark*, 274).

The Pharisees’ wrongheaded traditions extended to Sabbath observance with the same upside down results. Over time a myriad of regulations regarding what constituted “work” developed, specifying in great detail what could and what could *not* be done on the Sabbath Day (see Bob Deffinbaugh, “16. The Sabbath Controversy in the Gospels,” bible.org/seriespage/16-sabbath-controversy-gospels). Merely walking on the Sabbath is a breach of the law, unless the distance is strictly limited.

Mark 2:23-3:6 records two Sabbath controversy flare-ups between Jesus and the Pharisees. In the first (2:23-27), the Pharisees object to Jesus’ disciples picking and eating handfuls of the raw wheat while walking through a grain field. This is permitted as long as a sickle is not used (Dt 23:25), but not on the Sabbath according to Pharisaic tradition. Picking grain and rubbing away the chaff to eat the kernels amounts to harvesting, which is forbidden on the Sabbath (Ex 34:21). In the second (3:1-6), the Pharisees object to Jesus healing a man with a paralyzed hand or arm. Again, healing is permitted, but not on the Sabbath – unless the person’s life is in danger. In their understanding, this man is not facing a life-threatening emergency, so his healing can wait. In both instances their traditions undermine a right understanding of the Sabbath. In the first place, Pharisaic legalism turns the intended benefit of Sabbath observance into a burden, and in the second, it turns doing what is good into doing what is evil by omission. How ironic!

23 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. 24 The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

25 He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? 26 In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."

27 Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

3:1 Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. 2 Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. 3 Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone."

4 Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent.

5 He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. 6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "grainfields" and "grain" in v. 23.
- Bracket the Pharisees' accusatory question in v. 24.
- Circle "Abiathar" in v. 26.
- Circle "consecrated bread" in v. 26.
- Box "not" indicating *contrast* in v. 27.
- Box "so" indicating *result* in v. 28.
- Highlight v. 28.
- Circle "the synagogue" in 3:1.
- Bracket "watched him closely" in v. 2.
- Insert // after "to do evil" before "to save life" in v. 4.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 4.
- Circle "stubborn hearts" in v. 5.
- Circle "Herodians" in v. 6.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Is *what* Jesus' disciples are doing a violation of the law; for example, are they stealing grain? Explain (see Dt 23:25).
 2. What about *when* the disciples are doing it; is that a violation of the law? Explain.
 3. The Pharisees' question to Jesus is *accusatory*. How so?
 4. Is Jesus' appeal to what David did (1Sa 21:1-6) a defense based on *need* or *authority*? Explain.
 5. What does verse 28 indicate regarding the *purpose* of the Sabbath?
 6. The Son of Man is *Lord* of the Sabbath (v. 28). Explain what that means regarding Jesus.
 7. What are the Pharisees looking for Jesus to do in the synagogue and why?
 8. Why do the Pharisees *remain silent* in answer to Jesus' question?
 9. Jesus' words in 3:4 *complement* his words in 2:27. How so?
 10. **Discussion:** Jesus is *angry* and *distressed* with the Pharisees. Talk about why.
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Commentary On The Text

Mark 2:23-3:6 contains the fourth and the fifth of five episodes in this section (2:1-3:6), describing a number of controversies between Jesus and the Pharisees (cf., 2:16, 18, 24; 3:2, 6) that end with the Jewish leaders plotting to kill him (3:6). These sibling episodes relate to the erupting feud between Jesus and the Pharisees over Sabbath observance. In both cases, the Pharisees do not object to what Jesus and his disciples are doing, but to when they are doing it. Harvesting and healing are lawful, but not on the Sabbath—according to the Pharisees. The Talmud, a comprehensive written version of Jewish oral law and subsequent commentaries on it, originating from the second century—specifies 39 kinds of activity forbidden on the Sabbath. For example, removing all or part of a plant from its source of growth, which is what Jesus' disciples did when they "picked some heads of grain" (v. 23), is defined as harvesting or reaping and is forbidden. (Climbing a tree is rabbinically forbidden, for fear this may lead to one tearing off a branch. Riding an animal is also forbidden, as one may unthinkingly detach a stick with which to hit the animal.) And removing the husk from the kernel, which is what Jesus' disciples did when they rubbed the heads of grain together in their hands (Lk 6:1), is defined as threshing or winnowing and is also forbidden. (Separating peanuts from their thin brown skins by blowing on the mixture, thereby dispersing the unwanted skins, would amount to winnowing according to the Talmud, and would also be forbidden.)

In the first episode, Jesus' disciples pick a few heads of grain as they walk along a narrow path traversing the grain fields. The Pharisees (see v. 6; cf., v. 16), see them and ask Jesus the accusatory question, "Look why are your disciples doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" The point of their question can be put in a declarative way: "Look, your disciples should not be doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath." As far as the Pharisees are concerned, the disciples are harvesting or reaping, which are forbidden on the Sabbath (Ex 34:21). And since they are Jesus' disciples, they consider him responsible, even complicit in his disciples' unlawful conduct.

He responds to their accusation by appealing to the story of David recorded in 1 Samuel 21:1-6. As the story goes, David is running from Saul when he goes to Nob where he asks the high priest for bread for himself and his needy companions, but Ahimelek has no ordinary bread on hand, so he gives David "the consecrated bread," which only priests are permitted to eat (Lev 24:9). The fact that God does not condemn him for what he does suggests to some that human need takes priority over ceremonial regulations. But that does not seem to be the point of Jesus' argument. As one commentator explains: "David did what he did when he and his companions were hungry and in need. The same is seemingly not the case with regard to Jesus and the disciples . . . Also, the illegality of David's action was not connected with breaking the Sabbath law but the law that stipulated that only priests could eat the consecrated bread of the tabernacle" (Eckhard J. Schnabel, Mark,

TNTC, 77). Then he goes on to explain the logic of Jesus' argument based on authority, not need. "If David's authority was sufficient to obtain priestly approval for an action that was illegal, then Jesus can declare an action deemed illegal by the Pharisees to be permissible since his authority exceeds that of David (explicit in v. 28)" (Schnabel, 77).

Jesus finishes responding to their accusation with two statements, clarifying the purpose of the Sabbath and the extent of his own authority. In the first, he makes it clear that the Sabbath was created to be a benefit, not a burden to people. And in the second, he makes it clear that as the divine Son of Man (Da 7:13-14), he is Lord over the Sabbath. He "has authority to override the Sabbath law and, certainly, interpretations of the Sabbath law advanced by the Pharisees" (Schnabel, 78).

In the second episode, Jesus heals a man with a shriveled hand in a Galilean synagogue on a different Sabbath, thereby exercising his authority as the Son of Man. As the plot thickens, the hostility grows between Jesus and the Pharisees. On this occasion, "some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath" (v. 2). They permit healing on the Sabbath only when a life is in danger, which it clearly is not in this case. The man's healing can wait. Evidently, they believe Jesus can heal the man and apparently, suspect he will heal him, so all they need to do is wait for their patience to be rewarded. Jesus accepts their silent challenge, stands the man up in front of them all, and asks the thorny question: "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" (v. 4). The answer is obvious, and they know it; nevertheless, they choke on it . . . for good reason. "If they answer in the positive, they will encourage Jesus to heal the man. If they answer in the negative, they will argue the impossible (nobody wants to do evil and kill, on any day of the week), and they will be exposed as people who do not seem to care for the well-being of the man with the paralysis" (Schnabel, 79). Jesus is angry with them, on the one hand, and yet grieved for them, on the other, because of their stubborn hearts. One commentator observes: "This is the only explicit reference to Jesus' anger in the New Testament. It was nonmalicious indignation coupled with deep sorrow (grief) at their obstinate insensitivity (*pōrōsei*, 'hardening'; cf. Rom. 11:25; Eph. 4:18) to God's mercy and human misery" (John D. Grassmick, "Mark," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 115). Jesus then forces their hand by restoring the man's hand—without touching him. The only work he does is to utter a three-word command. Nevertheless, the Pharisees begin to plot his death.

The *upper story* affirms the unique authority of Jesus, the divine Son of Man, further confirming that the kingdom of God has truly come near. The *lower story* condemns the obstinate refusal of the Pharisees to admit the obvious, their need to repent and believe in Jesus—which amounts to a rejection of the truth that misses the forest for the trees.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 23 *grain* "While the generic term (*stacus*) can refer to the cluster of seeds at the top of grain such as barley or wheat, in the NT the term is restricted to wheat (L&N 3.40; BDAG 941 s.v. 1)" (*The NET Bible*, 49tn on Mk 2:23). "The time must have been late spring or early summer, as harvest time was not far off (barley was ripe in April/May, wheat in May/June" (Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark*, TNTC, 76).

v. 26 *Abiathar* Cf., "Ahimelek" (1Sa 21:1, 2); or "Ahimelech" (ESV, NET). "Mark stated that David's action occurred in the days of Abiathar the high priest, but the high priest was actually Ahimelech, his father (1 Sam. 21:1). A plausible explanation is to render the introductory phrase: 'in the passage about Abiathar, the high priest' (cf. parallel phrase in Mark 12:26). This was a customary Jewish way of indicating the section of the Old Testament where a desired incident could be found. Abiathar became high priest shortly after Ahimelech and proved more prominent than he, thus justifying the use of his name here" (John D. Grassmick, "Mark," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 114; see also William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, NICNT, 115-16; Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT, 146-47; *The NET Bible*, 52tn on Mk 2:26).

v. 26 *consecrated bread* "The sacred bread refers to the 'bread of presentation,' 'showbread,' or 'bread of the Presence,' twelve loaves prepared weekly for the tabernacle and later, the temple. See Exod 25:30; 35:13; 39:36; Lev 24:5-9. Each loaf was made from 3 quarts (3.5 liters; *Heb* 'two tenths of an ephah') of fine flour. The loaves were placed on a table in the holy place of the tabernacle, on the north side opposite the lampstand (Exod 26:35). It was the duty of the priest each Sabbath to place fresh bread on the table; the loaves from the previous week were then given to Aaron and his descendants, who ate them in the holy place, because they were considered sacred (Lev 24:9). See also Matt 12:1-8, Luke 6:1-5" (*The NET Bible*, 53sn on Mk 2:26).

v. 28 *Son of Man is Lord . . .* Cf., Da 7:13-14. "It is as the extraordinary, unique Son of Man that Jesus is the *Lord* (*kyrious*) of the Sabbath and thus has authority to override the Sabbath law and, certainly, interpretations of the Sabbath law advanced by the Pharisees. The claim to be *Lord of the Sabbath* affirms the unique authority that Jesus exercises in his belongs" (Schnabel, 78).

3:1 *the synagogue* Cf., 2:6-7. "There is no evidence as to which particular synagogue this was, except that it was in Galilee. The likelihood is that it was in Capernaum, since the theological delegation from Jerusalem still apparently held its watching brief"

(R. Alan Cole, *Mark*, TNTC, 130; cf., 120; so also Stein, 153).

v. 2 *they watched him* I.e., "some of them," namely, "Pharisees" (2:24; cf., vv. 6, 16). "From the context, their 'watching' is malicious in nature (cf. Ps. 37:12 [36:12 LXX]), for their purpose is to bring legal charges against him (J. Edwards 2002: 98)" (Stein, 153). "They permitted healing on the Sabbath only if a life was in danger. This man's problem was not life-threatening and could wait till the next day; so if Jesus healed him, they could accuse Him of being a **Sabbath**-violate, an offense punishable by death (cf. Ex. 31:14-17)" (Grassmick, 115).

v. 4 *to do evil / /* "The phrases 'to do good or to do evil' and 'to save life or to kill' are individually examples of *antithetical* parallelism, but together they serve as an example of *synonymous* parallelism" (Stein, 154, italics added).

v. 5 *stubborn hearts* Cf., "hardness of their hearts" (NET, HCSB, NKJV; cf., ESV). "This expression describes people who cannot or will not acknowledge the truth (for the disciples in 6:52; 8:17; for Israel's failure to recognize Jesus as Messiah in Rom. 11:7, 25; 2 Cor. 3:14; John 12:40). If the heart (cf. 2:6 NRSV), the seat of discernment and volition, has become 'petrified', it cannot perceive new insight" (Schnabel, 80).

v. 6 *Herodians* "The exact identity of the Herodians is uncertain . . . Most likely they were not a religious sect but a political party of aristocratic families who favored the rule of Herod the Great (who ruled from 37 BC to 4 BC) and his descendants rather than direct Roman rule (Hoehner 1992: 325). This preference may have been due to the fact that Herod the Great was partly Jewish" (Stein, 156). "It is probable that they preferred Herod Antipas' rule to the direct rule of the prefects [e.g., Pilate]. The rule of the prefects originated from the Jews' desire to escape the hated Herodian dynasty, but they later found that prefecture rule was even less bearable than dynastic rule. Because of this the Herodians' position was undoubtedly strengthened, and they hankered after a reconstitution of a single united nation under Antipas as in the days of Herod the Great. This may account for their being in Judaea, as well as in Galilee" (Harold W. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, CEP, 332-333).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Jesus, the divine Son of Man, is Lord even of the Sabbath, so, unlike the hardhearted Pharisees, whose religious views missed the forest for the trees, repent and believe in him.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

Do you catch yourself saying “no” to your kids without even understanding the reason? I’ve definitely had days when I feel like the only word out of my mouth is “no.” I confess that sometimes my “no” is just plain dumb and serves my needs and not my child’s wants. Obviously, there are times when a firm “no” is in the interest of safety, but what if we made a conscious decision to say “yes” more often? Over the past few years my daughter has been super into dyeing her beautiful hair random colors and at one point asked if her friend could cut off six inches using a YouTube tutorial. My internal response to her request to play hair salon (the teenage version of a craft, which you know makes me sweat) was “no way!” I had to check myself to understand the struggle was more about my desire to control. Why not allow her the freedom to play? Do you ever wonder why you say “no”? Maybe you’ve always put the kibosh on your child’s requests and it’s your go-to response. It could be that your child’s behavior is bordering on out-of-control and the escalating tornado isn’t worth it. Perhaps you’re tired, in a bad mood, don’t feel good or just don’t want to deal, so denying a request is simply the easy way out. Maybe today needs to be a “yes” day. Allow your kid to play in the rain and stomp in every puddle. Go ahead and make cookies with them and give them more than you normally would. Play Uno. Again. We’re praying your “yes” fills your family with amazing memories!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Mark 2:23-3:6.

1. Read Exodus 20:8-11. What do you learn about the Sabbath?
2. What two things did Jesus and his disciples do on the Sabbath?
3. How did the Pharisees respond to Jesus’ disciples picking grain and Jesus healing on the Sabbath?

What Do You Think?

What does Mark 2:27 mean? Put that into your own words.

What Do You Do?

Don’t do any work for a whole day. Prepare as much as you can the day before, turn off work phones or email and set aside chores or other work. Instead, choose ways to worship and rest. Journal how things went and submit to kidpix@wearecentral.org for 3 bonus tokens!

CORE COMPETENCY: Single-mindedness

I pay attention to what God thinks is important for my life.

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 34:4

I sought the Lord and He answered me, He delivered me from all my fears.

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week’s verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD’S NAME _____

GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE _____

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for 12 years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Central Bible Church in 1998. He and his wife Ruth have one son, Zach.

Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. She and James are Shepherds of the Bailey Community Group. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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**CENTRAL
BIBLE CHURCH**

8001 Anderson Boulevard
Fort Worth, Texas 76120
817-274-1315
wearecentral.org