

PERSPECTIVE

THE MONTHLY JOURNAL OF MOUNT VERNON BAPTIST CHURCH

What Is

EVANGELISM?



Welcome to Mount Vernon!

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SERMON SCHEDULE

March 1 *The Journey of an Envious Heart*
Psalm 73
Assistant Pastor: Brad Thayer

March 8 *Who are God's People? Forgetful*
Exodus 32:1-34:35

March 15 *Who are God's People? Remembered*
Exodus 35:1-40:38

March 22 *Why Should I Belong?*
A study on church membership

March 29 *How Can I Belong?*
A study on church membership

New Members



THOMAS & GENEVIEVE CARRENARD
Douglasville



TODD & KATIE MATTERA
Marietta



NATALIE MOLNAR
Atlanta



TOMMY MCNEESE
Dunwoody



SUNDAY, MARCH 8
9:15-10:15 AM IN THE MOUNT VERNON ROOM

JOIN US FOR A FIRST LOOK AT MOUNT VERNON!
COME AND LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR CHURCH AS YOU
MAKE YOUR MEMBERSHIP DECISION.



Starting this month, we will be publishing a new weekly e-newsletter called *The Courier*. It will include the church calendar, Sunday evening prayer requests, volunteer and service opportunities, miscellaneous announcements, and classifieds. If you are interested in subscribing to *The Courier* via email please check the appropriate box on "The Edge" and place it in the offering plate. You will also be able to download a copy of *The Courier* from our website (www.mvbchurch.org). Please contact news@mvbchurch.org if you are interested in placing an ad in *The Courier*.




GIRLS

GUYS

GIRLS/GUYS DAY OUT
FAMILY EVENT-MVBC
SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 2009 11:00AM-1:00PM

All girls meet at MVBC Fellowship hall for a high tea and spa day.

All boys meet at Brunswick Lanes on Delk Rd for bowling and snacks.

Cost is \$2.50 per person. This is a family event for all ages. We ask that a parent is present at one or both of the events.

RSVP to Bethany by emailing at bethanysaunders@mvbchurch.org or calling x236



desiringGod

A Report from the Desiring God 2009 Pastors' Conference

by Bryan Pillsbury

On February 2-4 2009, I joined over 1,500 pastors in downtown Minneapolis to attend the Desiring God 2009 Conference for Pastors. The conference was entitled "Commending Christ: The Pastor, the Church, and the Perishing." The keynote speakers were Mark Dever, Matt Chandler, Michael Oh, and John Piper.

Dever delivered three sermons: "What is the Gospel?," "The Pastor's Responsibility with the Gospel," and "The Church's Responsibility with the Gospel." The thrust of his first message was focused on the word "clarity." He emphasized that we must be clear on what the Gospel is. In summary, all of us are created in God's image but have rebelled against our holy Creator. We now stand condemned and separated from God. There is no way the we can be righteous in our own strength in order to be reconciled to God. Therefore, we need a righteous Savior to satisfy the just judgement of our sin. In love, God the Father sent His son Jesus to be our substitute by dying on the cross to atone for our sin. Three days after his death, Jesus rose again and now sits on the right hand of the Father. Jesus is both Savior and reigning King. This is the Gospel, the good news, that the righteous, holy God has made a way where we may escape his wrath and come into a right relationship with him through his Son Jesus. On the cross Jesus received our sin and when we repent and trust in Christ alone for our salvation, he imputes His righteousness to us. The result is we are regenerated and given a new heart that is inclined to love and serve God. We are no longer focused on ourselves but after conversion our whole orientation is on the one true God.

Dever's second message was very convicting. Pastors are charged by Scripture to feed the sheep and follow Jesus' commands to make disciples everywhere, which is another way of saying "evangelize!" Dever carefully made the distinction between what evangelism is and is not. Personal testimony without the delivery of the Gospel is not evangelism.

Good works without the Gospel clearly delivered is not evangelism. Apologetics without the Gospel is not evangelism.

What I most appreciated about this particular message was the reminder that we cannot convert sinners. God does that. Evangelism brings clarity to the lost about what the Gospel really is. We need to be humble and compassionate toward people. Furthermore, we need to know and be clear and bold in delivering God's Word. The pastor has the responsibility to model and teach this to his people.

Dever's third address was the church's responsibility with the Gospel. This message was a departure from the norm often found in churches "Here it is. Now go do it!" Instead, it was a time of rich, heart-felt stories where Dever shared some of his own personal experiences, some of which were, for a lack of better words, "successes" and "failures." The transparency of this message made a lasting impact on my life.

The other conference messages were wholesome and encouraging. Next to Dever's message, I would highly recommend listening to Matt Chandler's message. It is very much like a modern day Jonah. His Nineveh was an old run down Southern Baptist church in Highland Village, Texas. His testimony will "knock your socks off."

The highlight of the pastor's conference, however, was and is always the biographical sketch presented by John Piper. He spends a whole year gathering data and researching each biography and then delivers an honest message about the person and his ministry. This year the biography was on the great evangelist George Whitfield. It was an amazing story!!!

All these messages are available free for downloads in print, audio (mp3) and video (mp4) through the Desiring God website. I would encourage you to check it out at www.desiringgod.org.



What Is EVANGELISM?

For many Christians today, Billy Graham remains the pre-eminent modern-day evangelist. The Fuller brush salesman turned preacher once argued, “Sincerity is the biggest part of selling anything, including the Christian plan of salvation.” Though I don’t think like the analogy (the Gospel is not a commodity) I love the urgency Graham modeled. So many Christians profess that Jesus is coming back but fail to tell others. Since He is coming back, since everything He said is true, we ought to plead with everyone to trust Him. Non-Christians need to see both our urgency and our sincerity.

But we have to be careful. Non-Christians don’t like the fact that the church—and Christians within the church—present themselves as spiritual know-it-alls. They value skepticism. Doubt, they say, is more intellectually honest. It is better to be on a spiritual journey, unsure of the final destination, than to claim to have *the* answer and plead with others to agree. To be sure, Jesus urged humility: “Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . the meek . . . the pure in heart.” We must also be bold. “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?” There is room for urgency *and* sincerity, for humility *and* boldness. Skepticism is not a reasonable option. I like how pastor John MacArthur put it:

If there is one word that best describes the Christian worldview, it is *truth*. In an age of changing opinions, multiple perspectives, and varying viewpoints, biblical Christianity stands by itself as objective, absolute and abiding truth. Scripture alone teaches us how to perceive the world in a way that accurately corresponds to reality. As such, its message of salvation is as timely as it is timeless. And its truth is as reliable as it is unchanging.

Since Christianity is based upon a “reliable” and “unchanging” truth, then Christians should share it with others. We have no greater task. Just ask Jesus: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:18-20). This Great Commission was preceded by a Great Warning, “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters” (Matt. 12:30). Christians are supposed to be gatherers, plain and simple. We are supposed to look for any and every opportunity for presenting the clear, the reliable, the unchanging message of salvation.

The verb “evangelize” is the transliteration of a Greek word *evangelizomai* which means “to announce good news.” It is “the proclamation of the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ

through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.” Evangelism takes place when the Gospel is presented. Now, just to be clear, evangelism is not:

- (1) *A vague demand.* We must do more than tell people to value or follow Jesus. We must tell them the whole story. They are sinful. They need a savior. Christ, the God-man, is that Savior. Forgiveness and eternal life are found only through His death and resurrection. We should be specific.
- (2) *An impersonal event.* I once read of a farmer coming across a torn page from a Bible, reading it, and coming to faith in Christ. Amazing! This, however, is not the evangelism we are called to do. Neither is evangelism throwing rolled up tracts out of moving cars with the hope a hitchhiker will pick it up (yes, I’ve read of that, too!) This is not the evangelism that we are called to do.
- (3) *A silent model.* Evangelism is not simply living as a Christian day in and day out and hoping someone will eventually ask, “Why are you unique?” We ought to live that way, and we ought to pray people ask that question. But we should take to heart Paul’s words to the church in Rome: “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’” Don’t just be good, bring good news.
- (4) *A manipulative ploy.* The use of bribery or threats does not constitute faithful evangelism. If our main goal is to get someone to pray a prayer, then we may be tempted to do anything we can to get them to repeat after us. Conversion, however, entails a change of the heart and mind. Again, going back to Graham, “It is impossible for man to turn to God to repent, or even to believe, without God’s help! All you can do is call upon God to ‘turn you.’” So, evangelists aren’t about twisting arms (literally or figuratively). We are about presenting the news with a sense of urgency and sincerity, humility and boldness, urging repentance and faith, and trusting God to do the rest.

How, then, should we evangelize today?

- (1) *Know the gospel.* It is difficult to share the message of salvation without a clear grasp of the message of salvation. That is one of the reasons when I preach that I constantly share the Gospel. I do this in the hope that God will use these words

to save the lost. I also share the gospel so that Christians will be reminded what it is and will be better equipped to share it. I often say something like this:

The Gospel is the most important message we have. Having been made in God’s image we all rejected our Maker. This rejection is obvious in everything from the existence of war and poverty on a global level to the greed and lust that makes a home in every human heart. God is not indifferent to this rejection. He is just. He has determined that one day every individual will be held accountable. Because God is love, He sent his Son into the world, Jesus Christ. Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life. When He was crucified a divine transaction took place. Christ took the punishment sinners like us deserved. Christ rose from the dead proving that everything He said was true. Now, those who place their faith in Christ, who turn from their sins and trust in Him, are forgiven. Those who reject Christ will experience everlasting punishment. This is the Gospel.

- (2) *Live the gospel.* Evangelism is hampered by lives that cannot be differentiated from the worldliness around them. Fight for a pure church, for a pure life. Ask a good Christian friend, “Is there anything about my life that would turn off a non-Christian to the good news?” Be holy. I love how C. J. Mahaney drove this point home: “What are your goals? Do they drive you forward—to financial security, more friends,

We are about presenting the news with a sense of urgency and sincerity, humility and boldness, urging repentance and faith, and trusting God to do the rest.

successful kids, a certain position at work, learning a craft or trade? Or do they drive you upward—to obeying and glorifying God above all else?” I want to live the Gospel and be driven upward by the Gospel.

- (3) *Know the Bible.* Take Peter’s words seriously, “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Pet. 3:15). The best way to be prepared to “give the reason” is by studying the Bible. Then, let your personal study overflow into your daily life: “Today, I read this . . . what do you think?” Be able and willing to share how God’s Word has changed you.
- (4) *Understand the goal.* Is the goal of evangelism God’s glory or conversions? This may sound like a trick question. Certainly God is glorified when people are converted. And yet, when discussing evangelism, Paul and Jesus point in the direction of God’s glory being the chief aim. So Paul wrote, “Neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who makes things grow” (1 Cor. 3:7). When God makes something grow (when He converts a sinner) He gets the glory. He did the work. When Jesus urged his disciples to be salt and light in an unbelieving world, He mentioned praise of the Father as the ultimate goal: “that they may see your good deed and praise your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16) When God saved and protected Israel, He did it for the sake of His own name: “For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my

glory to another” (Isa. 49:11). We should be about the business of sharing the message of salvation not only because we want to see our friends and family saved but because God is glorified in the salvation of sinners.

- (5) *Spend time with unbelievers.* We are too easily cloistered and too shy. We have to strategize ways to spend time with unbelievers. Our love for the lost should be obvious in our schedules. If we don’t see our workplaces and our neighborhoods as fields to be sown, we have lost the fight before it has even begun.
- (6) *Pray for unbelievers.* Trust that God cares about your unbelieving family member or friend even more than you do. So pray. Pray regularly, pray fervently, and pray in faith that God is able and willing to save the lost. Join us on Sunday evenings at Mount Vernon as we regularly pray together for those God has put in our lives that need the Gospel. We must pray with faith that God works in the lives of sinners.

It is so easy to be discouraged with our evangelism. Perhaps we should be discouraged. If we have been unfaithful in our evangelism, we should repent. Then we should get up, shake the dust off our jeans, and get to work. God is not asking us to be the next Billy Graham, but He is telling us to live the Christian life with urgency and sincerity, with humility and boldness. Moreover, we can be encouraged that God is faithful. The very reason you are reading these words now is because of God’s love for the lost. Jesus is coming back. Why has He yet to return? Is God dragging His feet? No, not at all. He wants to see more sinners saved. Peter explained: “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone

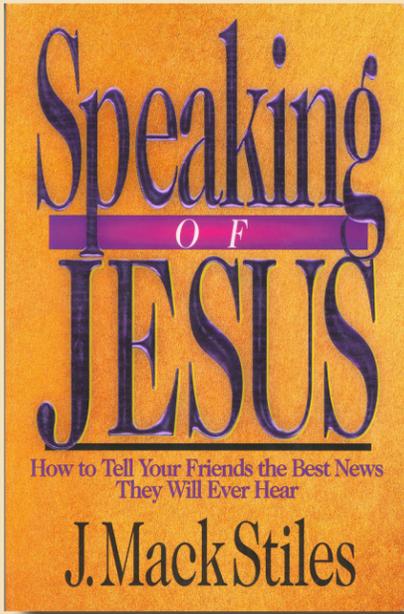
to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).

The famous nineteenth-century, British pastor, C. H. Spurgeon, understood the Lord’s faithfulness. It gripped him with such force that Spurgeon preached to unbelievers with a fiery conviction that Christ could save them from anything:

Do not however despair; Christ can surely deliver you. The demoniac had such an energy of evil within him that he broke the chains and bands with which he had been bound, he cut himself with stones, and howled all night amidst the tombs; but when Jesus came near to him he was soon seen clothed and in his right mind, sitting meekly at the Physician’s feet. And so wilt thou, poor captive of evil. Do not think that thou needst to be a drunkard, or that thy angry temper need always be thy master. Do not conceive that thou must always be a slave to lust, or led captive at the devil’s will. There is hope for thee, man, where Christ is, and though thy disease be as long standing as thy very life, yet a word from the powerful lips of the Son of God can make even thee whole.

Evangelism is the proclamation of good news. Let’s share it with a sense of urgency and sincerity, with humility and boldness.

~Aaron Menikoff



SPEAKING OF JESUS

by J. Mack Stiles

Reviewed by Jacob Hall

SPEAKING OF JESUS: HOW TO TELL YOUR FRIENDS the Best News They Will Ever Hear by J. Mack Stiles is an introductory and practical look at personal evangelism. The back cover simply states "Jesus has changed us, and he can change others too." In a time when so many of our fellow Americans are seeking and desiring change, this book serves as a handbook for Christians on how to use every opportunity to proclaim the Gospel to non-Christians. Stiles divides the book into three sections: "Part 1: Engaging Our Worlds," "Part 2: How Jesus Engaged His World," "Part 3: How Paul Engaged His World."

In "Engaging Our Worlds," Stiles begins with a chapter entitled "Blowing Smoke" where he shares two of his personal evangelistic stories, one that he butchered and one several years later that was productive and effective. It is in these opening pages that Stiles lays out what he sees as the basics of the Gospel—"God-People-Response-Christ-Cost" (18). Stiles realizes that not everyone is able to evangelize in the same way. Thus, he gives guidelines for how a Christian can adapt so that they can proclaim the Gospel effectively and unhindered as Paul does at the end of the Book of Acts.

The first guideline is to practice spiritual disciplines in your own life. He follows this with the need to give ourselves over to a community of believers that can minister to us and hold us accountable for our actions when we stumble. Third, Stiles says very simply to share your faith with others; tell them what Jesus has done and is doing in your life. The final, and often the most difficult, aspect is to take risks. We are called to give ourselves over daily to the lordship of Christ and proclaim His Gospel and works to those around us no matter the personal cost or discomfort (29).

One of the most informative and engaging sections is devoted to what evangelism is not. Stiles describes his former view of evangelism as being negative and associated it with people no one liked (34). Following this explanation of what evangelism is not, Stiles sets forth a Christian's role in evangelism and dispels rumors that one must be a great communicator to effectively evangelize. He uses his personal experience

as a counselor for a Billy Graham event to illustrate the point that the Holy Spirit converts people, not the evangelist (35). Thus, what is the Christian's role in evangelism? Christians are to be available to the lost, equipped with answers for questions, and motivated to make Christ known (36-37).

Section II is entitled "How Jesus Engaged His World." As Christians, our shepherd is Jesus, our God is Jesus, our very belief system hinges on Jesus. It only makes sense that we would examine His life and actions as a model for how best to share the Gospel. The first aspect of Jesus' ministry was the fact that nothing happened by chance. God governed divine appointments. Jesus was both intentional and aware of what was going on around him and made the best of each opportunity. People noticed him and his ac-

tions, and they raised questions that He would answer and bring people unto himself. The second aspect was humility. Jesus did not show up as a crusader determined to convince everyone of the truth by force and power but through love, humility, and devotion to others. This is evident by the way He crossed barriers. For example, He ministered to the woman at the well, a woman who would have been ignored by most Jews at the time. Jesus, however, crossed that cultural barrier and showed compassion.

In his chapters "Questions" and "Answers," Stiles shows how Jesus was best able to minister to people through asking questions and soliciting a response from His audience. He made them think about His message and led them to conclude that Jesus was the Christ. The lost do not have answers to the hard questions like Christians do. One of the greatest and easiest forms of evangelism is being able to give answers and reasons as to why things happen the way they do.

The final section is entitled "How Paul Engaged His World" and covers some of the ways Paul ministered and proclaimed the Gospel. Stiles points out something that is very important about Paul and his actions. Above everything else, above any other desire, Paul wanted to see everyone he met converted. Stiles also points out that, for Paul, evangelism was a lifestyle, not an action. Paul lived and breathed to tell others about Christ. He did this by invading the surrounding culture to Christ. An example is Acts 17 when Paul is at Mars Hill. We as Christians are to seize every chance to bring the conversation to Jesus and proclaim His glory. ☩

Stiles has also written 17 Things My Kids Taught Me About God and co-authored Mack and Leeann's Guide to Short Term Missions with his wife Leeann.

FITNESS CENTER



Hours:
Monday - Friday
8:00 AM - 8:00 PM

Usage Fee:
\$100 per person/year
\$150/year family max

Cardio and weight rooms are available for members of MVBC at least 16 years of age and their guests (maximum 2 guests per visit). Children ages 13-15 will be permitted with direct supervision of an adult. A \$10 deposit for each swipe card will be collected at the time it is issued.

Contact Anne Russo to purchase your membership and access pog at 404-303-8033 x241 or annerusso@mvbchurch.org.

MEN'S SMALL GROUPS

One of the great things about the Christian life is that God never intended it to be lived alone. We are saved into a family of brothers and sisters in Christ. God wants us to help encourage and spur one another on to holy living. Thus, we want to foster a culture of transparency and discipleship among men and women in our congregation. It is to that end that we currently offer men's small groups.

This is a time when men can regularly come together to discuss biblical truths, pray together, and encourage one another in the Lord, Jesus Christ.

(Sign-up sheets are available at Connections Corner. Please contact Smith Swilley at smithswilley@comcast.net or Mark Lamprecht at rbmark@gmail.com with any questions.)

March

1 6:00pm Lord's Supper	2	3	4	5	6 7:00pm Disciple Now	7 11:00am Girls/Guys Day Out
8 Daylight Savings Time Begins 9:15am First Look	9 7:00pm Singles' Dinner	10 10:30am Women on Mission 8:00pm Encouragement for Job Seekers	11	12	13 Women's Retreat	14
15	16 12:00pm RW & A Luncheon	17	18	19	20	21
22 10:30am No Red Zone	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Events Key

- Churchwide
- New Members
- Preschool
- Children (1st-6th grade)
- Singles
- Youth
- Women's Ministry
- Adults

Happy Birthdays!

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 2 Diane Hughes | 16 Anne Goodgame |
| Brandon Laney | 17 Ash Anderson |
| Brad Thayer | Becky Luttrell |
| 3 Bethany Houser | Wanda McCleskey |
| Samantha Long | 18 Garrett Harris |
| 4 Rachel Pillsbury | 19 Clayton Slagle |
| Joy Sullivan | 21 Lisa Timmons |
| Carol Thurman | 22 Michael Clay |
| 5 Hermina Magarian | Keith Cooper |
| Sid Miller | Charlotte Haigler |
| 6 Jaime Fulcher | 23 Dianne Hoover |
| Johnny Hall | John Pattillo |
| Karen Lisa Mack | Mary Robinson |
| Mary Turner | 25 Bob Linker |
| 8 Frank Louthan | 26 Hal Barnes |
| Ferrell Ryan | Everett Hodge |
| 9 Scott Sullivan | Ann Nable |
| 10 Erin Nable | Anita Shipley |
| 12 Anna Matheny | 28 Donna Reid |
| Von Sheffield | 29 Jason Clary |
| 13 Alice Nelson | 30 Georgiana Branan |
| 14 Amy Kunes | 31 Renee Moultrie |
| Katherine Scheidt | |
| Clay Speas | |

DON'T FORGET!

Remember the beginning of Daylight Savings Time! Set your clocks ahead one hour on the evening of March 7th, so that you are on time to Bible Study or the service on the 8th.



EVENTS

→ **LORD'S SUPPER**
MARCH 1 - 6:00 PM
Church family, we will be partaking of the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection. We encourage members to examine their hearts and relationships with one in preparation.

→ **DISCIPLE NOW**
MARCH 6-7
The 2009 DNow will be March 6-8 and will include in-depth Bible teaching, small group meeting times, and experiences on the ropes course. It will be a retreat within Atlanta at different host-homes of church members. Please contact Jacob Hall at 404-303-8033 x228 or jacobhall@mvbchurch.org.

→ **GIRLS/GUYS DAY OUT**
MARCH 7- 11:00 AM
This will be a fun-filled day for our preschool and children's ministries at MVBC. All "girls" meet at the church for "High Tea" and an afternoon of pampering. All "boys" meet at Brunswick Zone on Delk Road (shoes and snack will be provided).

→ **FIRST LOOK**
MARCH 8 - 9:15 AM
Join us for a First Look at Mount Vernon in the Mount Vernon Room! Come and learn more about our church as you make your membership decision. No need to RSVP—just come!

→ **ENCOURAGEMENT FOR JOB SEEKERS**
MARCH 10 - 8:00 PM
Join Aaron Menikoff and Doug Johns in room 211 as they help us approach unemployment from a biblical perspective. How can unemployment be used as a time of spiritual growth? What does it mean to faithfully look for work? What can be done to successfully find work? How can I encourage someone who is unemployed? Join us as we discuss these questions and network together for our good and God's glory. All are welcome.

→ **WOMEN'S RETREAT**
MARCH 13-14
The 2009 Women's Retreat "Being a Biblical Woman in a Modern World" is scheduled for March 13-14 at the Georgia Baptist Retreat Center in Toccoa, Georgia. The speaker will be Cheri Jimenez, president of the Embracing Womanhood Project.



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WWW.MVBCHURCH.ORG