

Volume III, Issue 11 \ November 2010

PERSPECTIVE

THE MONTHLY JOURNAL OF MOUNT VERNON BAPTIST CHURCH



Starting the Christian Life



REMEMBER THE CROSS



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STAFF > **SERMON SCHEDULE**

- November 7 Be Thankful**
1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
- November 14 Be Encouraged**
1 Thessalonians 2:1-16
- November 21 Be Brave**
1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13
- November 28 Lessons from John: Confess**
1 John 1:8-10
Pastoral Assistant: Jacob Hall

> **FIGHTER VERSE (Sept. - Dec.)**

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:4-11

INSIDE THIS EDITION > **Knowing the Body: Our Newest Members**

A look at the newest members to join the Mount Vernon family.

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The Bookshelf: What Is the Gospel by Greg Gilbert

A book review on the importance of knowing the Gospel.
by Dan Taylor

page 2

Cover Article: Starting the Christian Life: Remember the Cross

An article discussing conversion and the importance of the cross.
by Aaron Menikoff

page 4

Moving Forward with Elders

A brief explanation of the next steps in the elder process.
by Aaron Menikoff

page 7

▶ **Knowing the Body**
 ▶ **Our Newest Members**

The following people were voted into membership on October 24 at the regularly scheduled Church in Conference. Please be sure to get to know and love them.

"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." - John 13:35

Stephen Burnette
 Atlanta, GA



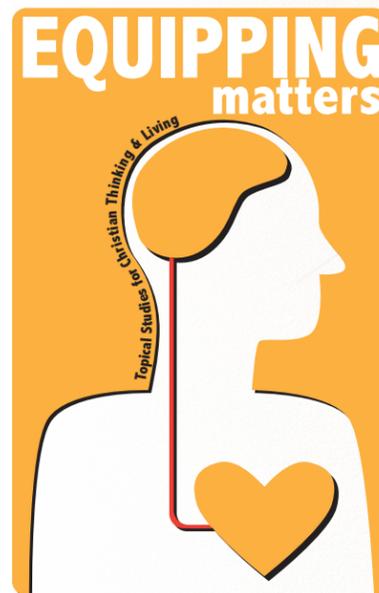
Bill, Cheryl, Will, and Jenna Coen
 Atlanta, GA



David and Julie Metry
 Smyrna, GA



Peter Miller
 Smyrna, GA



www.mvbchurch.org

Equipping Matters: Topical Studies for Christian Thinking & Living is a series of studies offered Wednesday nights to change the way we think and live. Come and learn every Wednesday night at 6:30 pm. Below is the course schedule through the end of the year.

Bible Overview: Key Themes in Understanding the Bible

November 3 | Revelation

An introduction to the idea that God has spoken.

November 10 | History

An explanation of the copying, translating, and use of the Bible.

November 17 | Unity

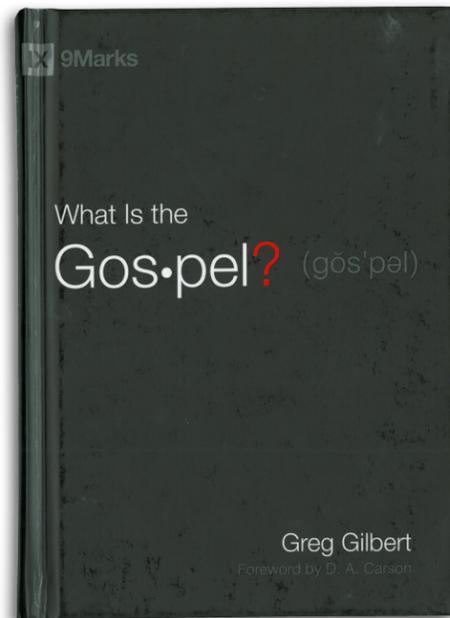
A defense of the Bible as one book with one main idea.

December 1 | Promise

A guide to understanding the point of the Old Testament.

December 8 | Fulfillment

A guide to understanding the point of the New Testament.



What Is the Gospel?

by Greg Gilbert

Reviewed by Dan Taylor

How would you answer a non-Christian friend that asked “What is the Gospel?” At the Mount Vernon booth during the recent Sandy Springs Festival, we received a variety of answers from people. Some included “The Gospel is Church.”; “The Gospel is Jesus.”; “The Gospel is my beliefs.”; “The Gospel is the word of God.”; “The Gospel is the Bible.”; “The Gospel is Music.” This is a fascinating question to pose to people. It is also a hotly discussed topic within the Christian community.

Greg Gilbert wrote the book *What is the Gospel?* to clarify and answer this question. One might think that this would be an easy question for Christians to answer. It could be compared to asking a carpenter “what is a hammer?” Just as a hammer is central to a carpenter’s vocation, so the Gospel of Jesus Christ stands at the very center of Christianity.

Many Christians hesitate to share the Gospel with friends, family, and acquaintances for fear of not having answers to all their questions. It is probably true, no matter who you are, that you will never be able to answer all the questions posed by non-Christians. Nonetheless, you can answer some of them, and I hope this book will help you answer the most important—what is the Gospel?

Chapter one starts with “Finding the Gospel in the Bible.” Gilbert begins by showing us how the Gospel is found in the book of Romans. Gilbert wrote, “Paul tells his readers that it is God to whom they are accountable.” Because he created us, God has the right to demand that we worship him. “Paul tells his readers that their problem is that they rebelled against God.” Therefore, they will have no excuse for their sins on judgment day. Lastly, “Paul says that God’s solution to humanity’s sin is the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Gilbert helpfully gives four simple words that outline the gospel—God, Man, Christ, Response. As we read through the rest of Scripture, we will see this reoccurring theme.

Gilbert continues by addressing a common response that “God would never judge them.” What happens when these people

are faced with undeniable evil? When they are confronted with truly horrific evil, then they want a God of justice—and they will want him *now*. The reality is they want God to overlook their own sin, but not the terrorist’s. Nobody wants a God who declines to deal with evil. They just want a God who declines to deal with *their* evil. Habakkuk 1:13 says about God, “Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong.”

In Chapter three, Gilbert describes sin as a lot more than just the violation of some impersonal, arbitrary, heavenly traffic regulation. It’s the breaking of a relationship, and even more, it’s a rejection of God himself—a repudiation of God’s rule, God’s care, God’s authority, and God’s right to command those to whom he gave life. Romans 3:23 makes this point when Paul says, “None is righteous, no, not one. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” For the people who think of themselves as basically good, the idea that humans are fundamentally sinful, is revolting. But for them to believe that their sin is only “negative thinking,” is to err greatly. To say that Jesus Christ died to save us from negative thoughts about ourselves is reprehensibly unbiblical. The Bible teaches that the final destination for unrepentant, unbelieving sinners is a place of eternal, conscious torment called “hell.”

The Bible also teaches of God’s power to save from this final destination. The Bible’s story is of God’s counteroffensive against sin; how God made and is making it right. It’s the story of how one day he will make it right finally and forever. This was accomplished through the person of Jesus who is completely human and completely God. Jesus, the Son of God was foretold in the book of Isaiah in chapter nine. Isaiah said, “He will be called wonderful counselor, mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Jesus came not only to inaugurate the kingdom of God, but also to bring sinners into it by dying in their place and for their sin, taking their punishment on himself, securing forgiveness for them, making them righteous in God’s sight, and qualifying them to share in the inheritance of the kingdom. “Behold, the Lamb of God

who takes away the sins of the world,” wrote the apostle John (John 1:29).

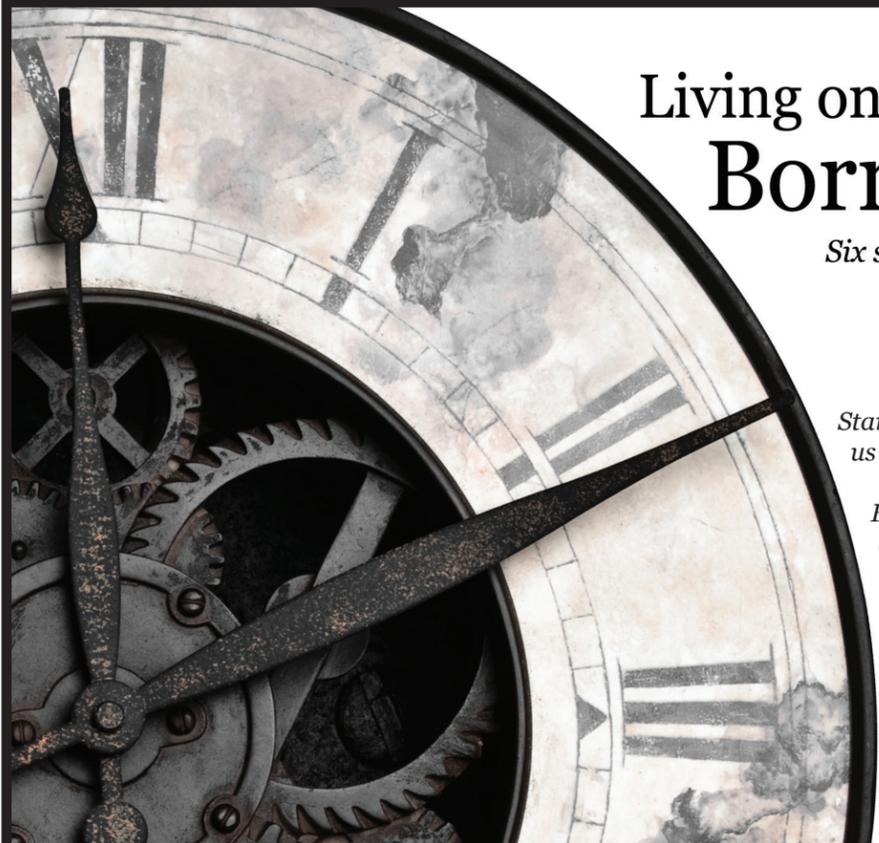
In chapter five, Gilbert discusses the responses of faith and repentance. As Christians, faith is not believing in something you cannot prove. It is reliance; a rock solid, truth grounded, promise founded, trust in the risen Jesus, to save you from sin. To expound further, we are relying on Christ to secure for us a righteous verdict from God the Judge rather than a guilty one. The Bible teaches that the greatest need of every human being is to be found righteous in God’s sight rather than wicked. When we put our faith in Jesus we are trusting that God will substitute Jesus’ record for ours, and therefore declare us to be righteous. So then, God declares us righteous, not because of anything we have done, but solely because of what Jesus has done for us. Faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin. Once we’ve seen ourselves as sinners and put our faith in Christ, we must then repent of our sins. Meaning not only asking God for forgiveness, but more importantly changing our life, heading in a new direction, turning away from sin, and seeking to live like Christ in thought, word and deed. It is a “life change,” wrote Gilbert. When we turn from sin, we learn to hate sin, and resolve by God’s strength to forsake sin. We declare mortal war against it. The notion that a person can have Christ as Savior, but not as Lord of their life, is nonsense. Repentance is a matter of a heart attitude towards sin. Do we hate sin and war against it, or do we cherish it and defend it?

The missionary Jim Elliot wrote, “He is no fool to give what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” Becoming a Christian is a costly thing. But it’s also true that the rewards of being a Christian are inexpressibly awesome. “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him,” promised Paul (1 Cor. 2:9). Jesus spoke of a future day when the kingdom would finally be consummated. On that day, he said, the angels “will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do

evil...” The great hope for Christians, the thing for which we long, and to which we look for strength and encouragement, is the day when our King will part the skies and return to establish his glorious kingdom, finally and forever. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord. God intends to create for his people a new world, free of sin, death, and sickness. War will end, oppression will cease, and God will dwell with his people forever. Our longing for his return increases, our prayers to him grow more fervent and our love for him deepens.

The church is the outpost of God’s kingdom in this world. It’s where God’s Holy Spirit is at work remaking and rebuilding human lives. It’s where God’s people learn to love one another, to bear one another’s burdens and sorrows, to weep together and rejoice together, and to hold one another accountable. The church is where the life of the kingdom is lived and showcased to a world desperately in need of salvation.

In the final chapter, Gilbert ends with a couple of questions for us as Christians. “Has God’s grace caused you to love the world around you more, and long to see people come to know and believe in Jesus Christ?” If we truly understand the grace God has shown us, our hearts will burn to see that same grace shown to others. There are many good things that we can do as Christian, but the fact is that most of those good things will happily be done also by people that are not Christians. But if we as Christians fail to proclaim the gospel of Jesus, who else is going to do that? No one. So let the truth of the Gospel penetrate your heart and even break it for those who do not know Jesus Christ. Meditate on what it will mean for your friends, family, and co-workers to stand before God the righteous Judge apart from Jesus Christ. Remember what the grace of God has done in your own life, and imagine what he could do in theirs. Take a deep breath, pray for God’s Spirit to work, and open your mouth and speak! ■

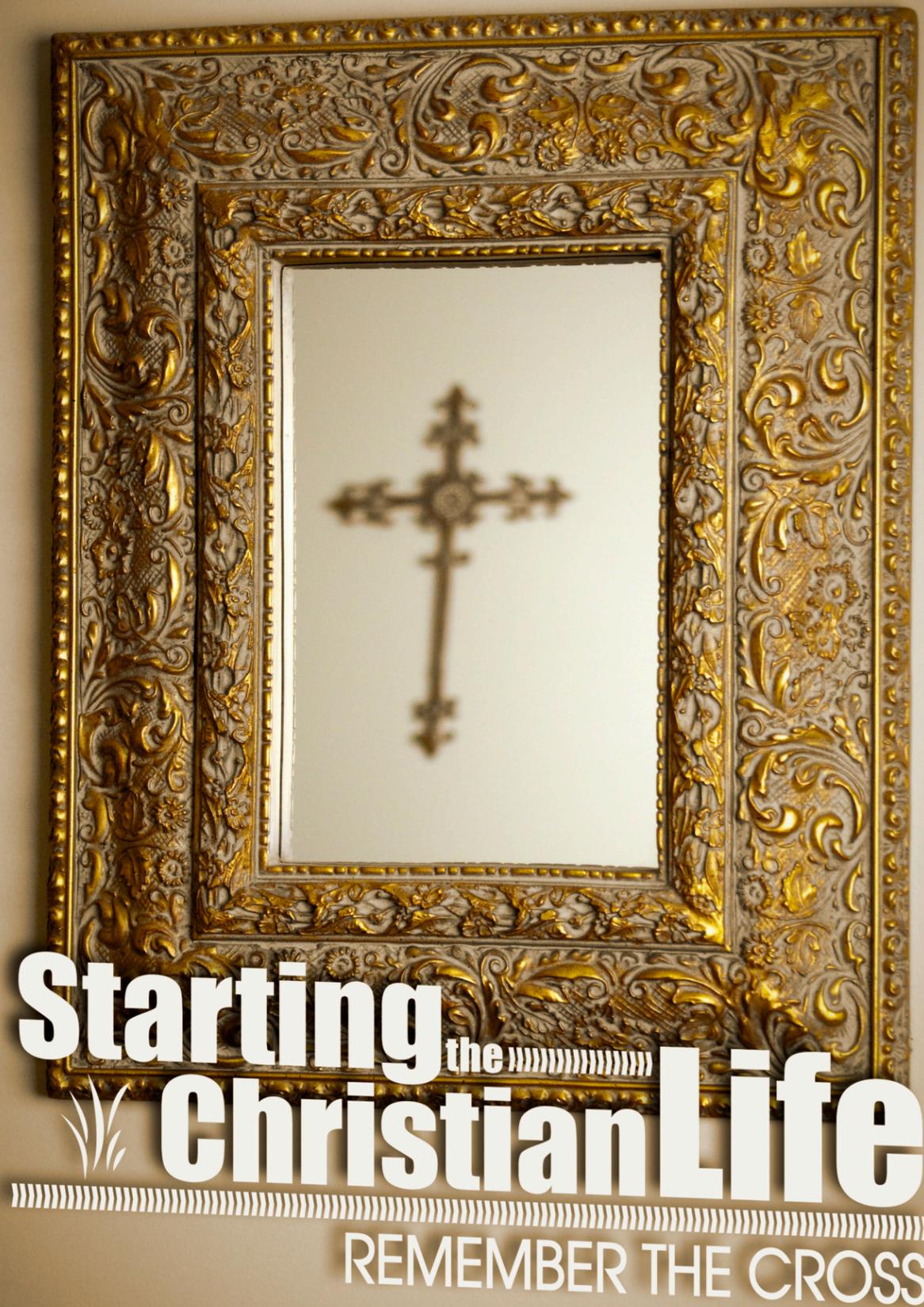


Living on Borrowed Time

Six studies through the book of 1 Thessalonians

Starting in November, Pastor Aaron will be leading us through Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians.

Each sermon will be available online the Monday after it is delivered through the Mount Vernon podcast on iTunes or the church’s website at www.mvbchurch.org. Sermons will also be available on CD for \$5 per copy.



Starting the Christian Life

REMEMBER THE CROSS

There is a lot to do when you become a Christian. The list can be overwhelming. We are supposed to tithe. We are supposed to attend church. We are supposed to forgive others. We are supposed to serve the needy. We are supposed to be good spouses. We are supposed to be good parents. You get the idea. This mass of duties becomes a mountain too high to climb. Before long, you feel so overwhelmed by the number of things you *have* to do that the faith which was supposed to set you free begins to feel like prison. What's a Christian to do? Remember the Cross.

The Importance of Remembering

Married couples love to talk about what brought them together. Whether they've been married five weeks or five decades, it doesn't matter. They love to re-tell the story of how they met, how they fell in love, and ultimately how they became engaged. We do this to remember. When marriage gets hard, it is helpful to recall why you were married in the first place.

God's people have always looked to the past to get them through the present and prepare them for the future. Not long after Israel fled Egypt with Moses, God gave them instructions on how to live as His people. Embedded in those instructions was a reminder of what He had done: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God" (Lev. 25:38). God is identified as *their* God. He is the one who saved them from slavery. And now they were called to trust that He would keep His promise. In this case, God would deliver them to the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. They looked back with confidence so they could look forward in faith.

Years later, when Israel was poised to enter this Promised Land, Moses led them to remember what God had done. "Because he loved your forefathers and chose their descendants after them, he brought you up out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength, to drive out before you nations greater and stronger than you and to bring you into the land to give it to you for your inheritance, as it is today" (Deut. 4:37-38). Here again, Moses reminded Israel that God had saved them. Therefore, they could trust that God would be with them, finishing the plan He had promised. In this case, driving the nations out of Canaan and giving that land to Israel. They remembered the past so they could trust God with the future.

When Canaan was finally delivered into Israel's hands, what did they do? They remembered. This time the people themselves recalled what God had done: "Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods! It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our fathers up out of Egypt, from the land of slavery, and performed those great signs before your eyes... And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God" (Josh 24:17, 18). God redeemed Israel out of Egypt and He provided them a place to live. This foundation was reason enough to continue following him, "We too will serve the LORD."

Centuries later, when Israel became a monarchy, many still recalled what the LORD had done through His servant, Moses. God "saved them for his name's sake, to make his mighty power known. He rebuked the Red Sea, and it dried up; he led them through the desert. He saved them from the hand of the foe; from the hand of the enemy he redeemed them" (Psa 106:8-10). The psalmists repeatedly draws Israel's attention back to that great day when God saved Israel from Egypt (Psalm 78, 80, 81, 105, 114, 135, 136).

Even the prophets looked back at the God's salvation. In Isaiah's day, God was known as the One who "brought the Israelites

out of Egypt" (Isa 16:14). And the LORD reminded His people, through the prophet Ezekiel, how He swore to Israel, "that I would bring them out of Egypt into a land I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Eze 20:6).

When Stephen preached to the Jews, he reminded them what God had done. God sent Moses to a suffering people so they might know that God cared, "I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free" (Acts 7:33). Stephen reminded them of the past. He and the prophets before him constantly told Israel how important it is to remember what God has done.

The Reasons to Remember

All this raises the question, "why?" Why was God so careful to remind Israel of what He had done? A couple answers stand out. First, He reminded them so that they would be thankful. Read Psalm 136. It begins and ends with a call to thanksgiving, "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. His love endures forever." Sandwiched in between is mighty act after mighty act. Throughout the centuries God has proved Himself faithful. So we should thank and praise Him.

We are not naturally thankful, not even toward one another. Our culture as a whole spends less time giving thanks. The classic "Thank You" card is being replaced by a flippant email. Such a practice might be excusable if you are giving thanks for lunch or a new toaster. But how should you give thanks for your very salvation? Israel sung and prayed, "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. His love endures forever."

Second, God reminded them so they would continue to live faithful lives. It seems that time had dulled the splendor of God's salvation much the way tarnish dulls the splendor of fine gold. As time went on, Israel drifted away from God, they stopped thinking about God, and they stopped serving God. In that sense, Israel forgot God. "They soon forgot what he had done and did not wait for his counsel. In the desert they gave in to their craving; in the wasteland they put God to the test" (Psa 106:13-14). In short, Israel stopped living faithful lives. They stopped turning to God in prayer. They stopped looking for His counsel, His wisdom. More than that, they began to complain against God. In that sense, they tested Him. To forget God is to turn away from Him. To remember Him is to turn back to Him.

How easy it is to forget an old friend who was there for you through a difficult time. Perhaps she offered you a word of encouragement. Maybe he provided you some much-needed money. Or, like Job's friends, perhaps they simply came around you in silence to mourn with you. A deep feeling of gratitude overcame you, along with a profound desire to be there for them one day. But as the days went on, the intensity of that moment waned. Life became filled with other people, other events, other needs. The problem you faced "way back when" was replaced by other problems. You forgot your friends and what they did for you. How easy it is to forget! God knows we are tempted to forget Him, too. And so He reminds us in His Word of who He is and of what He has done. He reminds us so that we will be thankful and continue to live faithful lives.

Remembering the Cross

I often meet people who don't remember when they became a Christian. I am one of those people. I remember hearing the Gospel. I remember being baptized. Sometime in between those two events, the Lord saved me. Thankfully, nowhere in Scripture am I called to remember the exact moment of my salvation! I am, however, called to remember my Savior.

November 2010

6	13	20	27
5	12	19	26
4	11	18	25
3	10	17	24
2	9	16	23
1	8	15	22
7	14	21	28

7 Daylight Savings Time Ends
6:00 pm Lord's Supper

14 9:15 am Knowing MVBC: Session 1
12:00 am Knowing MVBC: Sessions 2-4

28 10:30 am Guest Preacher: Jacob Hall

15 12:00 pm RW&A Luncheon

23 "Wednesday on Tuesday"
6:00 pm Thanksgiving Service

24 Office Closed
No evening Activities

25 Thanksgiving Day -
Office Closed

26 Office Closed

13 10:00 am Change of Seasons

19 7:00 pm USO

EVENTS

Churchwide

November 7 6:00 pm Lord's Supper
We encourage members to examine their hearts and relationships with one another in preparation for this celebration of Christ's death and resurrection.

November 23 6:00 pm Thanksgiving Service
We will be having a special service of thanksgiving as a part of "Wednesday on Tuesday." This will be in lieu of all Equipping Matters classes.

New Members

November 14 9:15 am Knowing MVBC: Session 1
12:00 pm Knowing MVBC: Sessions 2-4
(See ad to the right.)

Adults

November 15 12:00 pm RW&A Luncheon
Everyone 50 and older is invited to bring a covered dish for a free time of fellowship at our next RW&A (Ready, Willing, & Able) event.

Missions

November 19 7:00 pm USO
This missions fund raiser for our orphans ministry in the Ukraine includes dinner, a silent auction, live music, and fun. (See ad at bottom-right.)

Women

November 13 10:00 am Change of Seasons
Women of Mount Vernon are invited to come to a time of fellowship and learn about being a Titus 2 woman.

BIRTHDAYS

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Kyle Blackburn | 19 Jim Hickerson |
| 2 Margie Arnold | Leslie Wilkinson |
| Lollie DeFreese | 20 Patricia McDaniel |
| 3 Andrew Groslimond | Lily Squires |
| 4 Bill Coen | 21 Susan Wheaton |
| Russ Mitchell | 22 Karen Frantz |
| Nathan Pillsbury | Abby Holmes |
| 7 Sandi Korthals | William Terry |
| Carolyn Shaw | 23 Connie Heiskell |
| 9 Styles Caldwell | 24 Hala Mayes |
| 10 Kathy Smith | Tiffany Peón |
| 11 Jordan Brundage | Dan Taylor |
| June Dever | Jane Vanderzee |
| Andy Merl | Toni Winters |
| Marsha Whelpley | 27 Sue Cranfill |
| 12 Larry Luttrell | David Nash |
| 14 Kathleen Ford | 28 Jo Davidson |
| Jane Hall | Searcy Garrison |
| Anne Zimmerman | Violet Thompson |
| 17 Parker DeFreese | 30 Suzy Kauffmann |
| Elaine Johnson | |
| Katie Maffera | |
| Jennifer Miller | |
| Sarah Tucker | |



Knowing MVBC: The Membership Class is a four session course that introduces you to life at Mount Vernon, covering the following topics:

- Knowing Our Commitments: Church Covenant
- Knowing Our Beliefs: Statement of Faith
- Knowing Our Disciplines: Personal Discipleship
- Knowing Our Structure: Nuts & Bolts

Anyone interested in membership or knowing more about life at Mount Vernon is invited to *Knowing MVBC: The Membership Class*. All four sessions will be offered Sunday, November 14 (session 1 at 9:15 and sessions 2-4 starting at 12:00). Lunch will be provided. You may sign up on the edge of the bulletin or by contacting the church office at 404-255-3133.



NOVEMBER 19, 2010

7:00 PM TICKETS: \$10*

* \$10 if registered ahead of time. Tickets will be \$15 at the door.

Authentic Multi-Course
Ukrainian Dinner

Silent Auction
7:30 pm - 10:00 pm



Mount Vernon

BAPTIST CHURCH

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Sandy Springs, GA 30327