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PERSPECTIVE

THE MONTHLY JOURNAL OF MOUNT VERNON BAPTIST CHURCH

Starting the  **Christian Life**

IT'S ALL SACRED NOW



850 Mt. Vernon Hwy. NW \\ Sandy Springs, GA 30327
Phone: 404.255.3133 \\ Fax: 404.255.3166
info@mvbchurch.org \\ www.mvbchurch.org



Aaron Menikoff
Senior Pastor
aaronmenikoff@mvbchurch.org



David Carnes
Associate Pastor/Corporate Worship
davidcarnes@mvbchurch.org



Jacob Hall
Pastoral Assistant/Youth
jacobhall@mvbchurch.org



Chip Cofer
Recreation Minister
chipcofer@mvbchurch.org



Jennifer Miller
Children's Ministry Assistant
jennifermiller@mvbchurch.org



Anne Russo
Financial Assistant
annerusso@mvbchurch.org



Bryan Pillsbury
Associate Pastor/Missions
bryanpillsbury@mvbchurch.org



Brad Thayer
Assistant Pastor/Administration
bradthayer@mvbchurch.org



Terry Earl
Children's Ministry Coordinator
terryearl@mvbchurch.org



Kristine Harris
Choir Director/Administration
kristineharris@mvbchurch.org



Bert Neal
Administrative Assistant
bertneal@mvbchurch.org

STAFF > SERMON SCHEDULE

- August 1** **Become Less**
John 3:22-36
- August 8** **Worship in Spirit and Truth**
John 4:1-26
- August 15** Guest Preacher: Jim Wood
- August 22** **Reap a Harvest**
John 4:27-42
- August 29** **Believe**
John 4:43-54

> FIGHTER VERSE

[T]hat 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 2:10-11

INSIDE THIS EDITION >

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A look at the most recent additions to the Mount Vernon family.

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Knowing the Body

Our newest members

Thomas & Theresa Dean
Marietta, GA



The following people were voted into membership on July 25 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

Andrew & Ambra Groslimond
Alpharetta, GA



Guerda Sajous
Marietta, GA

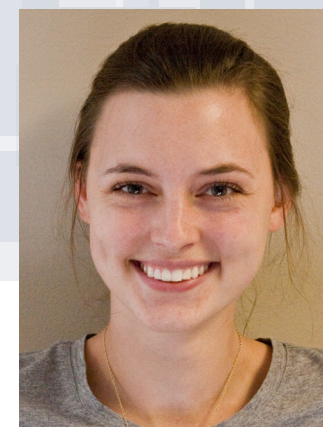


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Doug Harmon
Atlanta, GA

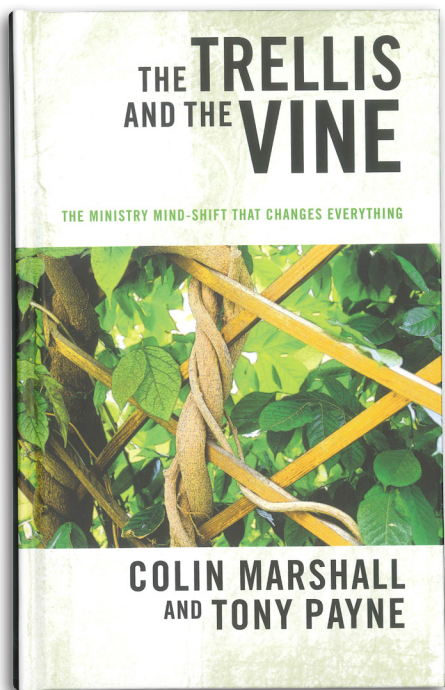


Lily Squires
Atlanta, GA



Michael Varzi
Atlanta, GA





The Trellis and the Vine

The Ministry Mind-Shift that Change Everything

by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne

Reviewed by Aaron Menikoff

*Article reprinted and slightly revised from TGC Reviews: <http://tgcreviews.com>

It is too easy to lose focus, to become distracted, to forget why we commit our lives to ministry. As a pastor, I can so easily become overwhelmed by the daily tasks of ministry. At most churches there are emails to return, there are services to plan, there are reports to read, there are letters to write. Some of this work is hugely important. It is difficult to oversee a church without doing the work of administration. Still, I don't know any pastor who signed up for this ministry because he wanted to see letterhead and logos change—he committed his life to the ministry of the church because he hoped to see lives change! This is true of every Christian. We want to be involved in something meaningful, something that matters. We want to see our life change, and we want to be used to change the lives of others.

Colin Marshall and Tony Payne of Matthias Media (an excellent, Christian, Australian publishing company) have given the church a great gift with their recent book, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything*. Here, they clarify the goal of Christian ministry. It is, they argue, both simple and measurable: “Are we making and nurturing genuine disciples of Christ?” (14) Too many Christian workers are involved in “trellis” work—building the structure of the church, when they should be involved in “vine” work—personally investing in the lives of others.

Don't we know this? I've never met a pastor who intentionally puts programs in front of people. Then why should Christian leaders read this book? Here are five reasons:

1. We are too tempted to create flash-in-the-pan growth. Well-intentioned attempts to bring people into the church can quickly distract us from the more laborious work of training disciples who will go into the world and make disciples. It is

not always easy to find a balance between “bring them in” and “grow them up.” Certainly both can take place. But Marshall and Payne are right when they argue that it is easier to plan an evangelistic event than work to make the culture of a church more evangelistic.

2. Because in an attempt to plug people in we can wear them out. Marshall and Payne mince no words: “We need to care for people and help them to flourish and grow in ministry, not squeeze them dry in the interests of keeping our programs running” (20). Are you sure you never do this? Let me ask you a question: do you love the members of your church for what they do: help in the nursery, keep problems away from you, go-with-the-flow, or for who they are: sinners saved by the blood of the Lamb?

3. We talk more about church growth than gospel growth. Every pastor needs to be convinced that God will not ultimately judge the success of a ministry on the size of the church but on the spiritual vitality of the sheep. “We talk these days about church growth. And when we think about our lack of growth, we think of the lack of growth of our particular congregation: the stagnation or decline in numbers, the wobbly state of the finances, and possibly the looming property issues” (37). These are real problems. But how often do we fail to measure gospel growth: the spiritual fruit growing in people's lives, an increased passion for God, a growing fidelity to truth, a renewed commitment to evangelism?

4. We are tempted to withdraw into public ministry when we should persevere in private ministry. Perhaps this sounds strange, but the reality is pastors can hide behind public preaching and teaching just as they hide behind a stack of

papers in their office. If the pastor doesn't give himself to training others he runs the risk of creating a church that is merely a reflection of his own personality. Marshall and Payne put it this way:

Perhaps the most striking disadvantage of this way of thinking about ministry is that it feeds upon and encourages the culture of ‘consumerism’ that is already rife in our culture. It perfectly fits the spirit of our age whereby we pay trained professionals to do everything for us rather than do it ourselves (95).

What a danger! Public preaching and teaching is the God-ordained means of growing the church. But it does not replace our responsibility to see every member involved in doing the work of the Lord. Yes, the pastor must preach. “But crucially, the pastor is also a trainer. His job is not just to provide spiritual services, nor is it his job to do all of the ministry. His task is to teach and train his congregation, by his word and his life, to

become disciple-making disciples of Jesus” (99).

5. We want to make disciples but may not always know how. Discipling is better “caught” than “taught.” Still, if anyone can teach discipling it's the people at Matthias Media. Materials like *Two Ways to Live* and *Just for Starters* are fantastic, easy-to-use, theologically rich resources that we can implement in one-on-one or small group environments.

Every pastor, every Christian, is faced with the question, “how should I best use my time?” There is no simple answer, it will differ from person to person. Still, Marshall and Payne used Scripture to remind me how valuable it is to meet regularly with new and growing believers who can eventually turn around and meet with others. They explained the importance of giving over a portion of my schedule to discipling individuals and small groups. It may take time for me to see the fruit, but I have every reason to be confident that it is time well spent. ■

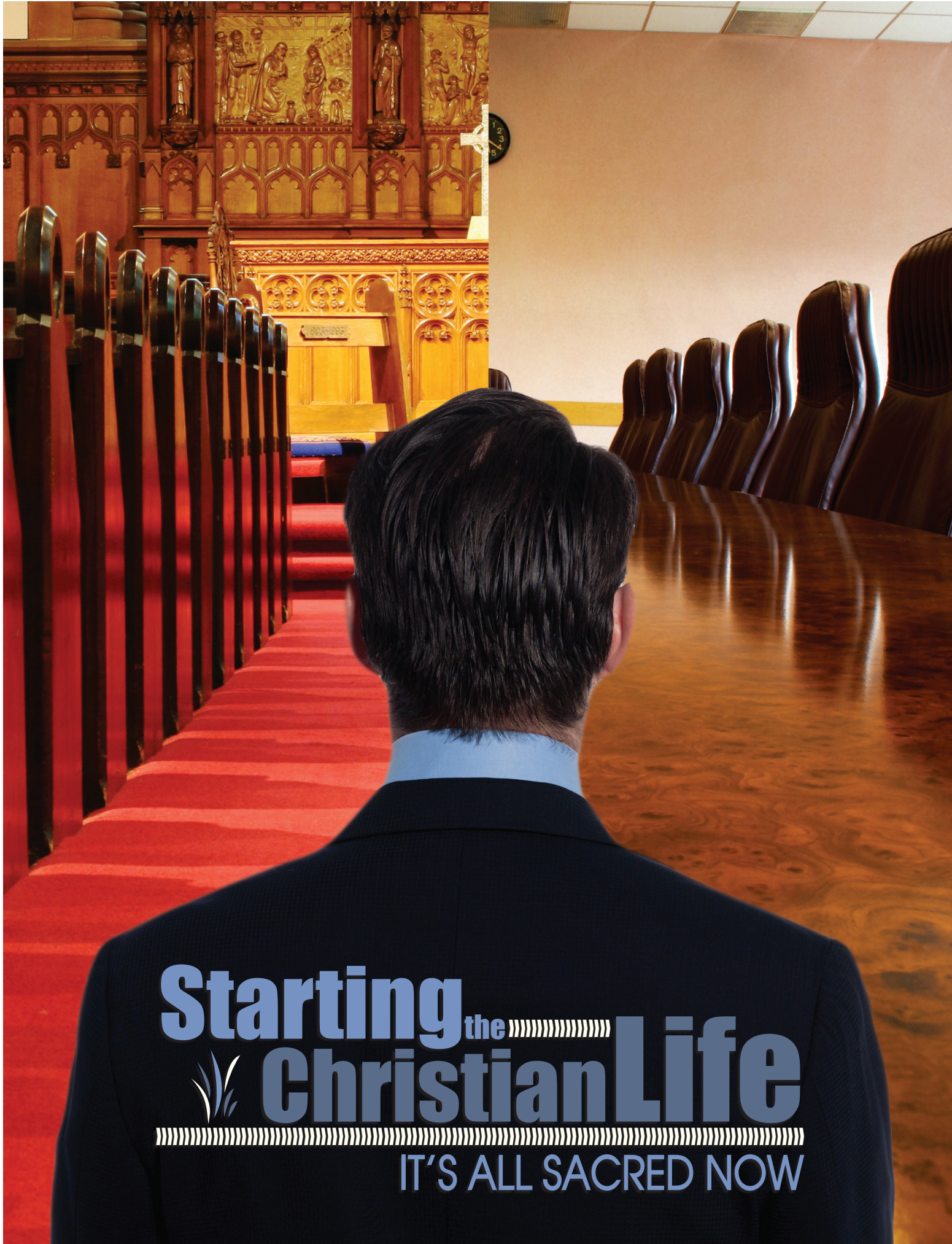
Constitution

conversations

The Deacons have approved a proposed Constitution that was formally introduced at the last Church in Conference on July 25. As of now, there are two more meetings scheduled for the Summer to discuss the Constitution. Here are the remaining dates, times, and locations:

- **Sunday, August 8 at 4:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall**
- **Thursday, August 19 at 7:00 pm in room 211**

If you are a member, please make a point to attend at least one of these meetings.



CHRISTIANS OF PREVIOUS GENERATIONS were very careful to avoid referring to a building as a church. It is common practice today. When I leave in the morning I’ll often say, “I’m going to church.” By that I mean I’m going to my office, which is housed in the building where the congregation of Mount Vernon Baptist Church meets each Sunday. But for shorthand I simply call it “the church.” So what did those earlier Christians call the building in which the church met? The meeting house!

Perhaps distinguishing between the church and the building seems trivial to you. “A rose by any other name,” right? Wrong. Our sloppy speech is too often a reflection of sloppy thinking. If we think of the church as a building we may think the building is holy. If we think the building is holy we may be tempted to act one way in the church and another way outside the church. This is dangerous.

The Clark Kent Syndrome

You remember Clark Kent, don’t you? Most of the time he was a bumbling reporter—tripping over desks, awkward around people, always looking out-of-sorts. But when a crisis came up he disappeared. He was nowhere to be found. This is because in reality he is Superman. Much like his life is divided into two parts, we are tempted to divide our life. There is the life we live at church and the life we live the rest of the week. Part of our life is sacred, the rest of our life is secular. This is not how it should be.

Let’s take Bob, for example (if your name is Bob, my apologies, I’m not referring to you—at least on purpose!). Bob goes to church every Sunday. He is, what you might call, “religious.” From 9:30 am to 12:00 pm Bob looks and talks like a Christian. On a good week, Bob’s Sunday morning experience seeps into the week. He prays Monday morning, thinks a bit about the sermon, and looks forward to coming back to church next week. But often by Wednesday, Bob is swamped with work. His boss is getting on his nerves. He doesn’t have time to think about God, devotions, prayer, church, etc. For most of the week, Bob looks, sounds, and acts like everyone else.

What has Bob done? He’s adopted the Clark Kent syndrome. He’s managed to compartmentalize his Christian life. Sunday at a church building is “holy time.” Sometimes this “holy” time seeps into the week, but not very often. The only question that remains is how long will Bob continue to attend “holy time” and, for that matter, how much longer will Bob continue to try to live the Christian life at all. As time goes by, won’t Bob begin to notice that his so-called faith isn’t making that much of a difference in his life? As time goes by won’t he begin to wonder if Christianity really matters? As time goes by won’t Bob give up altogether? I’ve seen it happen. My guess is, so have you!

A compartmentalized faith isn’t genuine faith at all. This is Jesus’ point in the parable of the sower. Jesus talked about a farmer scattering seed. The farmer is an evangelist and the seed is the Gospel. When people hear the Gospel they all respond, but the responses are different. First, there is the person who doesn’t allow the seed to take root. Second, there is the person who seems excited the seed was planted, but the moment life gets hard, he gives up. Third there is the person who receives the Gospel but gets distracted by the world. Fourth and finally, there is the person who receives the Gospel and lives it out daily. Only this latter person is truly a Christian.

So where is Bob in all of this? He seems closest to the third example; someone who gets distracted by the world. The Gospel, for Bob, is not a compelling influence in his life. It is easy to criticize Bob but, truth be told, we all face the

danger of compartmentalizing our faith. We are all too easily distracted.

We can avoid falling into Bob’s trap by remembering that when we became Christians God changed us. Our Christian life has nothing to do with *where* we are (at church or at work) and everything to do with *who* we are. Understanding this will help us live for Christ. If God changed us, if He declared us to be holy, then it’s all sacred now. In other words, every thought, action and word is set apart for God.

Avoiding a Double Life

We are all tempted to be distracted by the world. We are all tempted to live one way at church or with Christians and live another way when we are alone. But as we’ve seen, this is dangerous. If we live this kind of double life it may be evidence that we have no spiritual life at all. It may indicate that we are not really Christians. So what do we do? How can we avoid living a double life? It starts with understanding what it means to be a Christian.

You see your sin.

The Bible is full of lists and rules and commands and decrees. These are good lists, good rules, good commands, good decrees. We would be foolish to think otherwise. Psalm 119 is a literary monument to the value of God’s Law, “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I will seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands” (119:9-10).

So the Bible presents us with the way to live. It is a good way. “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers” (Psalm 1:1). Jesus commends holy living. But he wanted us to understand we can never be holy enough. When a rich young man came up to Jesus and asked how to inherit eternal life, Jesus pointed him to God’s Law, “You know the commandments,” Jesus said to the man who wanted eternal life, ““Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother”” (Mark 10:19).

The young man thought he had done all this. He responds with confidence, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” Jesus, knowing the man’s heart, asks even more, “One thing you lack... Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (Mark 10:21).

We are then told that this young man went away sad because he did not want to be poor. Why did Jesus keep pointing this young man to the Law? Because Jesus wanted the young man to be aware of his sin. The young man came to Jesus thinking he deserved eternal life. After all, he kept the Law! Jesus wanted him to know he was a sinner. Jesus used the Law to make us aware of our rebellious nature (Romans 3:20). The Bible reminds us that we utterly fail to keep God’s commands. Our problem is the same problem that the nation of Israel faced in the book of Judges: “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit” (Judges 21:25). A Christian is aware of his or her sin.

You see your need for a new heart.

It is not enough to be a better person. That rich young man Jesus talked to didn’t need more laws to follow, he needed a heart that wanted to follow Christ more than his money. He left Jesus sad because he had great wealth. The problem was with his heart. Jesus was driving home what that rich young man should have already known. We need a new heart!

God has made our need for a new heart very clear. In Ezekiel 36:26 we read of God’s promise, “I will give you a new heart

and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." So it is not enough to be aware we are sinful. It is not enough to obey God. We need a new heart, and with that new heart come new and godly desires. This is the amazing work of God.

In short, our problem is not that we've broken a list of rules—though we have! Our problem is that we have defective hearts. We need new ones. Until we have a new heart, we cannot follow God. That's what Jesus wanted that rich young man to understand.

You see Christ's death as the only answer.

The promise to give us a new heart is called the new covenant. Covenant is another word for promise. The LORD, speaking through Jeremiah, said “The time is coming...when I will make a new covenant” (Jeremiah 31:31). What will this new covenant be like? “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33).

God fulfilled this promise, this new covenant, through the death of Jesus Christ. Before he was arrested, Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with his disciples. The Passover is a celebration of God's salvation of Israel when the nation was in bondage to Egypt. When Jesus celebrated the Passover, He taught that it was now about God's salvation of his people from sin. Sitting before His disciples Jesus took a cup of wine and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20). Hours later, Jesus bled and

holiness. This is because the Spirit unites us to Jesus Christ. Married to Him we cannot help but become like Him. Sinclair Ferguson put it this way:

Christian believers have a new and distinct identity because of the bond of union which the Spirit creates between them and Christ. If, by definition, they have died to sin, they cannot go on living in it. Moreover, they have also been raised in Spirit wrought faith-union with Christ into newness of life (Rom. 6:8, 11). The very idea of continuing in sin, the hallmark of the old life, suggests the impossible—that the Christian can engage in self-contradiction, denying his new life in Christ (*The Holy Spirit*, 145).

Remember the Clark Kent syndrome? Remember Bob who lived one way at church but another way in the world? He was engaged in self-contradiction. He professed one thing on Sunday but lived another way on Wednesday. But if Bob has submitted his life to Christ, if Bob has a new heart and is filled with God's Spirit, then each day will be holy because Bob is now holy. He is still a sinner but he is also a saint. The power of the Spirit will be evident in his life. Will Bob be perfect? Of course not! There is still an internal battle being waged within. That fight will not end until this life is over. In the meantime, the Christian will battle on, persevering in the faith, week in and week out. Every day.

You see it's all sacred now.

There are some events that change your life forever. Marriage is one of them. Once you've tied the knot you will never be the same. Your time and your priorities will now be shared with another person. All of your life is now viewed through the lens of that commitment. The same is true of Christianity. Once you

A COMPARTMENTALIZED FAITH
isn't GENUINE FAITH at all.

died on the cross. How will God give us a new heart? How will He change us? Through Jesus' blood! His death accomplished something wonderful. So Peter wrote, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness" (1 Peter 2:24). When we submit our lives to Christ, trusting in His death and resurrection, we receive a new heart. Now the promises God made to Ezekiel and Jeremiah have come to pass. The Christian has a new heart. This is only possible because of Christ's death. Those who follow Him in faith have this new heart and are filled with God's Spirit.

You see the power of the Spirit in your life.

To have a new heart is to be Spirit-filled. God places His very Spirit within the believer (Ezekiel 36:26-27). This is the Spirit that gives us a new birth (John 3:5-8). It is the Spirit that gives life (2 Corinthians 2:6). To say you are a Christian is to say that God's Spirit is working in you and for you. With the Spirit, we can now live for God. Paul explained the power of the Spirit in our lives, "So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Galatians 5:16).

It is through the power of the Spirit that we become more and more like Christ. We will not be perfect but we will grow in

become a Christian, all of your life is seen and lived through the lens of your commitment to Christ.

This is why Paul speaks so radically of the change we undergo when we become a Christian. We are “a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 6:17). This is not compartmental change. The image here is not one of a house slowly being renovated. The image is of a house being rebuilt. We are not what we once were. We are new. As a result, everything we do, we do for the sake of God’s great name. “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

We know there are many professing Christians like Bob who are living a double life. But let's not think about *them* for a moment, let's think about *us*. The truth is, we are all tempted to live this double life. But Christianity does not allow for it. The Lord demands all of us, all the time. Will we fail? Of course we will, and praise God for the forgiveness that we find in Christ. But if we see our sin, our need for a new heart, Christ's death as the only answer, and the power of the Spirit, then we will understand with our minds and display with our lives that it is all sacred now. ■

~ Aaron Menikoff



1 10:30 am Lord's Supper	2	3	4	5	6	7 7:00 pm Mount Vernon Dialogues
8 9:30 am Joint Sunday School 4:00 pm Constitution Conversations	9	10	11	12	13	14 7:00 pm Wears Valley Q&A
15 9:15 am <i>Knowing MVBC: Session 1</i> 10:30 am Guest Preacher: Jim Wood	16	17	18	19 7:00 pm Constitution Conversations	20	21 10:00 am A Change of Seasons
22 5:30 pm Deacon Installation	23	24	25	26	27	28
29 7:00 pm Church in Conference	30	31				

August 2010

Churchwide ▾

August 1 10:30 am 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.

August 7 7:00 pm Mount Vernon Dialogues
(See ad on page 7.)

August 8 9:30 am Joint Sunday School
All Sunday School classes are invited to a joint Sunday School hour with Mack Stiles to hear about his ministry in the Middle East.

August 8 4:00 pm Constitution Conversations
August 19 7:00 pm
(See ad on page 3.)

August 14 7:00 pm Wears Valley Q&A
(see ad on pg. 7)

August 22 5:30 pm Deacon Installation Service
There will be a service to honor and set aside the seven new men that will be serving as deacons with a reception to follow.

August 29 7:00 pm Church in Conference
There will be a specially-called Church in Conference to vote on members to serve on standing committees and ministry teams.

New Members ▾

August 15 9:15 am Knowing MVBC: Session 1
(See ad to the right.)

Women ▾

August 21 10:00 am A Change of Seasons
The women's ministry invites all ladies to pray, share, and encourage one another as they continue to seek Titus 2 relationships.

BIRTHDAYS ▾

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 2 Amy Lambert | 16 Melvin Mooney |
| 4 Mark McCallum | Bo Stillwagon |
| Jo Anne Padgett | 17 Paul Holtzclaw |
| Minnie Reddick | Carolyn Nygaard |
| Gary Reid | Janet Oliver |
| Wayne Tucker | 18 Nancy Garner |
| Nancy Wilkinson | 19 Linda Baugh |
| 5 David Dorsett | Candy Houser |
| Adam Parker | 20 Bill Mitchell |
| Suzi Voyles | 22 Dot George |
| 7 Elaine Bell | Jim Heiskell |
| Michael Reagan | JoEllen Langmack |
| Jim Sproull | 23 Clint Daniel |
| 8 Anna Carron | Bonnie Laney |
| Lee Gregory | Cheri Perkins |
| Ron Harris | 24 Deana Menikoff |
| Greg Tatum | 25 Thomas Dean |
| Jim Wellman | Charles Harkey |
| 9 Emily Boynton | 26 Bob Wharton |
| Ruth Murdock | 27 Larry Baugh |
| 10 Bill Franklin | Charlotte Dixon |
| Troy Kubes | 28 Karen Ford |
| Vicki Nash | Darcelle Reid |
| Iain White | Pat Terry |
| 11 Anne Elizabeth | 31 John Galloway |
| Goodgame | Julia Gurley |
| 12 Peg Windham | Ida Wheeler |
| 15 Elinor Becknell | |
| Lisa Blackburn | |



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*. The first session will be offered on Sunday, August 15 at 9:15 am in the Mount Vernon room. All four sessions will be offered on Sunday, September 15 (1 in the morning and 3 in the afternoon). You may sign up on the edge of the bulletin or by contacting the church office at 404-255-3133.



Good living is coupled with good thinking. The head and the heart are connected. Peter tells us that we are to add knowledge to our faith. Why? So that we can live effective and productive lives (2 Peter 1:8).

EQUIPPING MATTERS is a series of studies offered Wednesday nights starting September 1 to change the way we think and live.

Look for upcoming brochures on what classes will be offered.



850 Mount Vernon Highway NW
Sandy Springs, GA 30327