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# PERSPECTIVE

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BAPTIST CHURCH

WHAT TO  
EXPECT  
WHEN HE'S  
PREACHING  
A USER'S GUIDE TO THE SERMON

Why Are  
People Drifting  
from the Church?



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**STAFF > SERMON SCHEDULE**

- February 5**     **Will You Raise Up Elders?**  
*| Timothy 3:1-7*
- February 12**   **Will You Raise Up Deacons?**  
*| Timothy 3:8-13*
- February 19**    **Living Without Fear**  
*Psalm 91*  
 Assistant Pastor: Brad Thayer
- February 26**    **Will You Keep the Gospel Central?**  
*| Timothy 3:14-16*

**> FIGHTER VERSE**

Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!

Psalm 105:4

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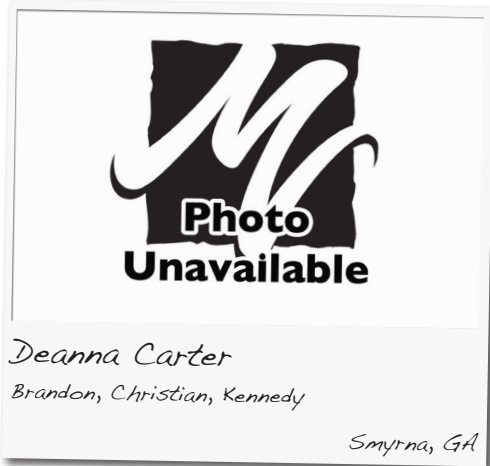


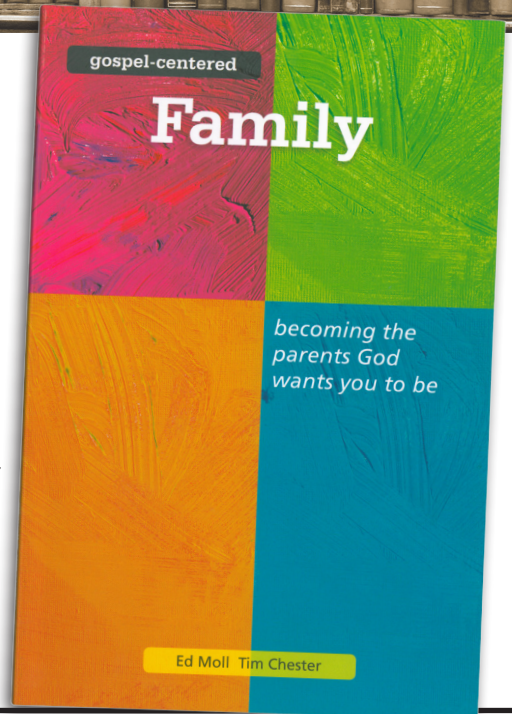
# Knowing the Body

[our newest members]

The following adults were voted into membership during the quarterly Church in Conference on January 29. 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*





## Gospel-Centered Family

by Ed Moll and Tim Chester

Reviewed by Doug Young

I RECENTLY TAUGHT MY CHILDREN the meaning of an old, and all but lost saying—*A rift in the lute*. A lute is the predecessor to today's guitar. The rift, or crack, is evidence of a problem that, if not addressed, threatens the instrument. Tennyson's line in his epic poem *Merlin and Vivien* gives us the meaning: "It is the little rift within the lute that by-and-by will make the music mute, and ever widening slowly silence all." What poetic tragedy. Our own sin, combined with the sins of our children have created a rift that only the gospel can mend. The fact is that most of us need help understanding how to apply the gospel to our families. Our busy schedules, changing needs, demands, problems, and a culture hostile to families in general and Christian families in particular make it a challenging task indeed.

*Gospel-Centered Family*, by Ed Moll and Tim Chester, is such a welcome book because we need help learning how to apply the gospel to our families. We need help not only in teaching the gospel to our kids, but in *living* the gospel through our families. *Gospel-Centered Family* is like a personal trainer. It provides an excellent agenda but demands that you do a lot of your own thinking and application. The book is 95 pages thin but busting with excellent questions and ideas for action. The beauty of this book is that it does not give all the answers but equips you to dig deep for the answers yourself, while directing you toward gospel applications.

The book is built around 12 core principles:

1. Your family can show how great it is to live under God's reign of love.
2. Knowing God is far more important than "succeeding" in life.
3. The biggest obstacle to good discipline is our own selfish hearts.

4. Trying to be a good parent will crush you if you don't embrace grace.
5. Addressing the heart matters more than controlling behavior.
6. Don't train your child to be a legalist.
7. Make sure you enjoy your children.
8. Teach your children about God in the context of everyday life.
9. Shape *what* younger children watch and *how* older children watch.
10. Teach children to pray by praying with them.
11. We belong to two families.
12. Children are not the center of the world.

If parents took these core ideas to heart and determined how to implement and communicate them consistently and faithfully to their children, they would take a mighty leap forward in applying the gospel to their own homes.

I was struck with a thought in the first chapter that has brought some clarity into my own home. Simply, my children must learn to live happily under my authority. Home is the place they must learn this lesson. Moll and Chester write, "Discipline disobedience. Don't let your child rule the home. If you do, you'll be teaching them that they are king in their lives. They're not. It won't prepare them for wider social interaction. And it won't prepare them to meet the true King" (13). I'm reminded that the standard is immediate, complete, and cheerful obedience. What's at stake is more than harmony in my own home. The question is, will they submit to the King? If they cannot submit to me now, they will struggle to submit to their rightful King. The authors lift the idea of submission higher when they say "Your number one aim as a parent is to show how great it is to live under God's reign of love" (14). Submission is beautiful. It's royal. After reading this chapter

I want to faithfully and lovingly teach my children obedience and submission in preparation for King Jesus.

Submission is certainly fundamental, but perhaps even more fundamental is the idea that our discipline should be aimed at our children's hearts rather than their behavior. If we fail here, we may be grooming little moralistic Pharisees. Most of us would agree that God is most concerned for our children's hearts. But how do we address our children's hearts? Does it mean that we have the perfect Scripture text ready for every possible scenario? Does it mean we must be skilled child psychologists ready to uncover their motives, fears, and conditions? Moll and Chester simply suggest that godly discipline helps our children see their need of Christ. Do we discipline in such a way that our children have a growing sense of their need for a savior?

I would like to see Moll and Chester flesh out how we can cultivate in our children a growing sense of their need for a savior. If I could add just one thing to the book I would suggest it here. While we do not want to cultivate legalists, the law does have a powerful role to play in our parenting. Children are born with an incredible aptitude to justify their sin. Unless they are first convinced that they are sinning, and then convinced that they are powerless to save themselves, they won't cry out for a deliverer. I am convinced that parents must address their child's behavior by giving the child appropriate biblical categories for their behavior. Names like: selfishness, impatience, anger, rebellion. A child must see his own condition and eventually submit to the verdict: "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). They must see their own face in the mirror. The child's conscience, as well as the law, which says *do this and don't do that*, have their place. "But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:23-24). Parents can fall into the trap of not teaching the law for fear of creating legalists. But they must remember the role of the law as a tutor. Our children must see their face in the mirror and see their sin as sin, before seeing Jesus as their all-sufficient savior. May God give us grace to hold up the mirror of the law and then lovingly and consistently, direct them to Christ. Let's not neglect the tutor's role. What Moll and Chester provide here is an excellent chapter on the issue of legalism and how to avoid the error that pressures our children to earn our acceptance through performance. "God accepts us as we are by grace, but He accepts us with an agenda of change. Of course He does: He wants the best for us, which is to become like His Son" (47).

*Gospel-Centered Family* is as much a book for parent's hearts as it is for their children. "How ironic that trying to give a true picture of God's amazing forgiveness can make us feel guilty. It's more than ironic: it can become a dangerous cycle. If we feel condemned, we won't communicate grace, making us feel still more condemned. If we want our families to be gospel-centered, then we must bring the gospel to bear on our own failures. If we can't bring our parenting sins to the cross, then we don't have any good news to celebrate. We can't communicate grace to our children if we're not communicating it to our own hearts" (32-33). Another irony of parenting is that our children's sins often provoke in us the same sins we are trying to correct. We get impatient with their


impatience, angry at their anger, rude at their rudeness, and we lose self-control when we behold their lack of self-control! Moll and Chester speak graciously to the exasperated parent and apply the same remedy that our children need—the gospel.

*Gospel-Centered Family* will help you ponder the gospel's implications for your home. The book does this by asking excellent questions. We often underestimate the importance of asking and answering good questions. It's so easy to skip the questions! An education consultant I know said something I will never forget. "The quality of your life is determined by the quality of the questions you ask." One such question: "Think about the last time you got mad with your children. What did you want in that moment?" The content of the chapter helped me to think through this question. The last time I was angry with my children I wanted peace, quiet, harmony and compliance. These are all good things. The problem is that I wanted these things more than God's glory, and more than the plan God has for me as a father. In that moment I was unwilling to step my children through the necessary loving discipline the moment required. O ye of little faith! My loving Father has given me a task that is not only best for my child but best for me as well. Instead, the idol of "Peace Without Effort" raised its ugly head, and I worshipped it. I believe thoughtful consideration of these excellent questions will help parents understand not only their children, but themselves as well. Here are a few more:

- When do your children see or hear you extolling the surpassing greatness of Christ?
- Does your life prompt your children to ask questions about God "when you sit at home and when you walk along the road (Deuteronomy 6:7)?"
- Are you protecting your children from Christian service or preparing your children for Christian service?
- How do you open your home to the church family? Could you have someone live with you? Could you open your meal table more to people?

In the final section of the book titled "A Mission-Centered Family," Moll and Chester present a vision for families in the context of a bigger family—the Church. They encourage us to open our homes in practical ways and to give children important roles. They prompt us to be intentional about intergenerational relationships. We need "the wider church family for advice, encouragement, and challenge." Our children need good models of family life; they need opportunities to serve; they need the spiritual insight of seasoned believers and young believers zealous for Christ. No family is an island, and our children must understand that.

Most of us need prompts to act. As much as a book can, this one consistently calls us to put feet to our intentions. I heartily encourage parents to read this book together, dwell on its questions, consider its ideas for action and develop workable plans and patterns for their families. In fact, anyone who is involved in the lives of children would benefit from the wisdom in *Gospel-Centered Family*. Ultimately, it's the gospel we need. It is the gospel alone that will mend the rift. We may all be cracked, but thank God that he has addressed our every need in Christ. The gospel is truly enough. ■



# WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN HE'S PREACHING

## A USER'S GUIDE TO THE SERMON

## Why Are People Drifting from the Church?

**MANY OF US TAKE FOR** granted the importance of sermons. We dutifully listen week in and week out, but if we were to be asked *why*, I'm not sure we could give a good answer. Maybe you think that's not such a big deal. After all, I don't know how my car works, and I don't have to, so long as it gets me to the grocery store. But if we don't know why preaching is important, we may fall into the rut of becoming listless listeners. We will hear the Word of God but only casually, not really caring how it changes our lives. Eventually, we may begin to wonder why we even bother listening at all. At that point, we may even be tempted to stop gathering with the saints.

And that, by the way, is exactly what's happening. According to the 2009 American Religious Identification Survey, 18 to 29 years olds are the least religious age group. Drew Dyck, author of *Generation Ex-Christian*, explains why young people have left the church. Some he calls "recoilers." They left because the church hurt them. Others are "modernists" who left because they reject the supernatural. The "neo-pagans" embrace the supernatural, but an earthier brand that denies the existence of a transcendent God. "Spiritual rebels" left to sow their wild oats—and they may never be back. Then there are the "drifters." They claim to believe the Bible, but church is irrelevant and unimportant to them.

I don't have much to say here to the recoilers, modernists, neo-pagans, or spiritual rebels. But I have a lot to say to the drifters. The drifters can't explain why they went to church, why they listened to preaching, maybe even why they first believed the gospel. The answers to these kinds of questions are important. The less we know about Christianity, the more likely we are to drift.

You may not be a drifter. You may be committed to your local church, a faithful servant, who loves God and his Word. But if you have ears, this article is for you, too. Consider this series of articles an extended exhortation not only to listen to preaching, but to know why you listen.

When my wife became pregnant with our first child, we bought *What to Expect When You're Expecting*. We wanted to be ready. We

knew that our lives would be forever changed, and we didn't want to be caught off guard. We wanted to know what that baby would be doing, how my wife's body would change, and how we could get ready so that the day that baby was born we could hold her with the confidence that we were fully prepared.

One of the reasons people struggle with preaching is they don't know what to expect. Of course, there are a lot of sermons preached that just aren't worth listening to. They don't deliver the Word of God, they are light and fluffy—like cotton candy. You don't get much out of these messages because, frankly, there's not much there. But sometimes, the problem isn't with the message, the problem is with us. We aren't prepared to listen. We come with all sorts of expectations that just aren't biblical. We expect the sermon to be short and funny and easily applicable. When the sermon goes a bit long, doesn't include interesting stories, or doesn't leave you with a list of things to do, we think the sermon was bad. All of that may be true! But it is also possible that you weren't prepared to listen because you didn't know what to expect.

I'm not convinced that pastors (like me!) have done a great job preparing their congregations to know how to listen to sermons or even why to listen to them. I want to help change that because there is nothing more wonderful than seeing God's Word change someone's life.

When I first came to Mount Vernon, I met a godly man who loved the Bible and the Lord. And he loved to listen to sermons—*online*. He attended church for a few weeks to see what the new guy would be like, but eventually he drifted away. He found ways to be spiritually fed that didn't involve sitting under the preached Word.

Maybe you know someone like that. Maybe you are like that. Before I can even begin to describe what we ought to expect from a sermon, we need to step back and wrap our minds around some of the main reasons preaching is taking such a hit today.

Be forewarned, in this article I may step on your toes a bit, especially if you are, in fact, someone who has turned your back on the discipline of listening to preaching in a local church.

But take heart, there is plenty of blame to go around. Let me admit, right off the bat, that not all sermons are created equal. Sometimes I preach a real stinker. In fact, one of the reasons I think so many young people are running from the church is because preachers are preaching bad sermons.

I want to talk about three problems in the church today that have led some people to drift from the church. I know there are other challenges, but these all relate to the topic of preaching.

### **Problem Number One: Preachers**

As tempting as it might be, there is just no way to separate preaching from preachers. You might argue that we could get someone to stand up in front of the church and simply read the Bible, but when I deliver a message on Sunday morning, I am doing more than reading a text. I am delivering a message, based upon Scripture, through the medium of my own personality. The quality of the sermon depends in large part on the quality of my preparation and delivery.

We need men who are able to teach, who work and pray hard for insight into the biblical text, and who are able to apply the Word to our lives today. The problem is, preachers don't always do this very well.

T. David Gordon is a professor at Grove City College who wrote a hilarious book entitled, *Why Johnny Can't Preach*. It is especially funny if you don't preach for a living. Gordon lays most of the blame for bad preaching on the preachers themselves, "I've always feared to state publicly that, in my opinion, less than 30 percent of those who are ordained to the Christian ministry can preach an even mediocre sermon." Ouch! According to Gordon, preachers fail to put in the necessary time and care to ensure that sermons have something as simple as a main point or a logical flow of thought. As a result, there is a near universal desire for shorter sermons. Better sermons would increase the demand for longer ones, "When a public speaker has something important to say, and says it in a well-organized manner that enables the audience to perceive its significance... people do not look at their watches, clear their throats, stretch, and do a number of nervous exercises indicative of their boredom. But if that public discourse is listless, rambling, disorganized, without clear purpose, and uninspiring, ten minutes seems like an eternity."

Gordon's criticism is severe but rings true. I can't speak for all preachers, but I can attest to the fact that a pastor's schedule can become full, and if he doesn't protect the time to prepare a sermon, that sermon suffers. Not only that, I know from personal experience that the quality of the pastor's spiritual life has a huge role to play in the quality of a sermon. Furthermore, sometimes a pastor tries so hard to please everyone in the church that, ironically, he doesn't please anyone. We (pastors) can be so eager to hear someone say, "Well done, good and faithful pastor," that we fail to preach the hard, unvarnished truth.

A sermon should have a prophetic edge to it. It should cut to the heart and convict the conscience. Too many sermons are disorganized, personal jeremiads that lack the incisive presentation of biblical truth. A pastor should carefully read the

Word, interpret the Word, apply the Word, and let the chips fall where they may. I think most people who hear preaching are right to want a sermon that is biblical, easy to follow, and hard-hitting.

Sometimes preachers try to impress us with expert explanations of cultural trends. Many preachers do this very well. Others do not. A preacher who finds himself too often muddling his way through contextual, cultural, and philosophical terrain may find himself lecturing but never actually preaching. A sermon must not be a display of a pastor's wit or cunning. Regardless of how organized that particular message may be, if it is not the simple proclamation of God's Word, it will not change hearts.

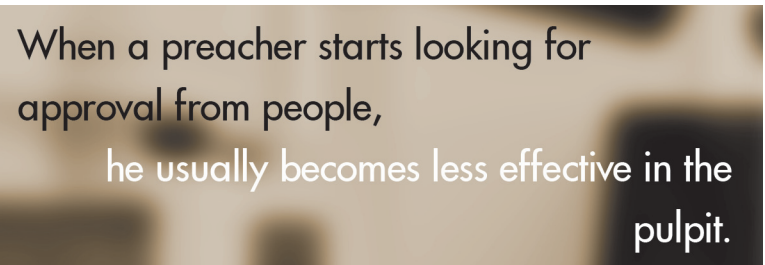
Sometimes preachers want to impress us with how relevant and applicable their messages are. But lost behind all the practical tips for better living is the spiritual food we need to truly feed our souls. Sermons like this may taste good, but they lack any nutritious value.

If you are looking for a pastor to showcase his brain power, or if you are looking for a few inspirational tips on how to parent or evangelize, you can find one! But these preachers aren't helping the church; they are hurting her. They are preaching to tickle the ears of their audience instead of prayerfully exhorting believers. Too many pastors want your approval. But know this: when a preacher starts looking for approval from people, he usually becomes less effective in the pulpit.

Right before I preach, I pray that I would be clear, that I would be faithful to the text, and that I would lose myself in the message. It is possible, even while preaching, to be concerned about how others are taking it in. But I want to forget myself in the pulpit. I want to be so moved by the text, and by the gospel, and ultimately by the Lord himself, that my heart is singing for joy even as my mouth is speaking the words I've prepared.

It has been said before that the type of men who go into pastoral ministry want to please people. And there is nothing wrong with wanting to please someone. The problem is that listening to preaching is not always pleasant—especially when the Holy Spirit is using those words to convict you of your sin.

The problem with some preaching today is pastors who want your approval more than they want the Lord's. They may never say that's the case, but their preaching proves it.



When a preacher starts looking for approval from people, he usually becomes less effective in the pulpit.

### **Problem Number Two: Shame**

In Romans 1:16, Paul wrote something remarkable: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Paul was in the capital city of the Roman Empire. He lived in a society that valued philosophy, reason, and argument. These citizens were

not impressed by the message of a crucified Savior. They cared nothing for a convict sentenced to death on a cross. How many must have shied away from this message and clung to religions that made more sense (see 1 Cor. 2). Into this cultural milieu Paul lets it be known that he is not ashamed of this gospel. He is convinced that his message is the power of God for the salvation of the world.

You may not live in the heart of an empire. But you undoubtedly know many people who scoff at the gospel message. To them the idea of a crucified and resurrected Savior is ludicrous. How tempting it is to downplay this message. How tempting it is to focus on the less bloody parts of the Christian faith. The men and women in our communities are not against religion in principle, just the idea that the only way to God is through his perfect Son, Jesus Christ. As a result, they look for a kernel of truth in every religion. They may choose compassion or love to bind all these faiths together into a worldview that fits their enlightened sensibilities. This is the overriding spiritual nature of our times, and it is true whether you live in Atlanta, New York, Los Angeles, or Topeka.

I was sitting in a Starbucks when I got into a conversation with a woman who is Jewish. She knew quite a few Christians, and she had respect for them (even Baptists, she told me!). She is sure, she said, that she was going to heaven. The important thing, she argued, is that we all have faith; it doesn't matter what kind.

The fact of the matter is the God of the Bible says there is only one true faith, and this message offends many people today.

David Plotz, editor at *Slate* magazine, spent a year reading the Bible. Then he wrote *The Good Book*, a report of his findings. He came to the conclusion that he wanted nothing to do with God as he is found in the Scriptures:

After reading the genocides, the plagues, the murders, the mass enslavements, the ruthless vengeance for minor sins or no sin at all, and all that smiting—every bit of it directly performed, authorized, or approved by God—I can only conclude that the God of the Hebrew Bible, if He existed, was awful, cruel, and capricious. He gives us moments of beauty—sublime beauty and grace!—but taken as a whole, He is no God I want to obey, and no God I can love.

Plotz is our neighbor. He is the person who cuts our hair, who bags our groceries, and whom we sit next to at work. Plotz is everywhere. Such people refuse to believe that God the Father would send his Son, whom he loves, to die on the cross to make atonement for our sins.

This is one of the  
great problems today:

We are ashamed of the gospel  
and our demand for gospel  
preaching has diminished.

If you are ashamed of the gospel, don't be surprised if some preachers are as well. I've stopped adding up the number of funerals I attend where the gospel is never preached. Good things are said about the deceased. True things are said about Christ. But too often the preacher never seems to get around to our sin and need for an atoning sacrifice.

Are you embarrassed by what happened at Calvary?

The soldiers removed Jesus' clothes. They tied chips of bones into the leather cords they used to whip his body. They scourged him until he could no longer walk. They pierced his hands and his feet with nails. They adorned him with a crown of thorns and offered him wine vinegar to drink. Finally they watched as he suffocated, hanging on a cross until he was dead.

Why did this happen? Because our sin is an ugly offense against a God who is infinitely holy. Only the death of the infinitely holy Son of God, the Lamb of God, could ever save us from the punishment that we so rightly deserve.

"Such preaching," some protest, "is fine for Good Friday, but we don't need it every Sunday." Yes, we do. This message is all that we have of any real value. It is our only hope. Paul recognized this. It's why he told the believers in Corinth, "And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:1-2).

We live in a world that finds the cross to be foolish. Even those of us who believe the gospel are tempted to hide it. And this is one of the great problems today. We are ashamed of the gospel and our demand for gospel preaching has diminished.

Thankfully, many pastors preach the whole counsel of God in the face of opposition. Thank God for such faithful men! But preachers are tempted to take the temperature of the church they serve. If they sense that congregation is offended by bloody religious talk, they may decide to downplay the cross.

This is why we need churches full of Christians who joyfully believe and are eager to hear 1 Peter 2:24 preached: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed." What an encouragement you will be to your pastor if he knows that you don't just tolerate it when he preaches on the cross of Christ, you expect it.

This is why it is so important for you to keep the cross front and center in your own life. Remember how you became a Christian. You did not save yourself; it was the work of God (Titus 3:5). He saved you through the death of his Son (2 Cor. 5:21). Make a point to remind yourself of this everyday so you don't grow ashamed of the gospel.

Another way to keep the cross front and center is to make a big deal of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Gather with your church when these ordinances are celebrated. In baptism we see how we followed Christ in death and have been raised with him to new life. In the Lord's Supper we see that Christ's body was broken and his blood was spilt so that we could be healed and forgiven. Your faithful participation in baptism and the Lord's Supper services



will complement a godly desire to hear the gospel preached.

Perhaps it goes without saying that you should be a part of a church that is unapologetic about preaching the cross. Expect nothing less. Though we are all tempted to be ashamed of the fact that the wisdom of Christianity is a wooden cross, it remains the center of our faith.

Sometimes, when I'm preparing to preach yet again on the cross, I think to myself, "But they know that already, won't I bore them with the gospel?" When this temptation hits me, I remind myself that if the sermon is boring it is the fault of the messenger, not the message. The gospel message is deeper than the deepest sea and more profound than the greatest human idea. The gospel of Jesus Christ is what I need. It is what our churches need. The gospel is what you need. So if you haven't already, find a church that is unapologetic about preaching the gospel and stay there.

### **Problem Number Three: Complacency**

In Luke 18, Jesus tells the story of two men who went to the temple to pray. One of these men was a well-known, Jewish leader, a Pharisee. The other was a well-known sinner, a tax collector. Tax collectors were infamous. It was bad enough they worked for Rome; most of them lined their pockets with the people's money. Tax collectors were considered traitors to Israel—beyond forgiveness.

Both men went into the Temple to pray. The Pharisee exclaimed, "God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all I get." The tax collector's approach was altogether different. He stood at a distance because he knew he was too sinful to approach. He didn't raise his eyes to heaven because he knew God is holy. And when the tax collector prayed he simply said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" It was the tax collector, said Jesus, and not the Pharisee, who went home justified. Two men. One thought he was godly but, in fact, he was in bondage to self-righteousness. The other man knew he was a sinner and, in fact, found forgiveness.

What was the difference between these two men? The Pharisee lived his life with a sense of complacency. He was not troubled by his sin. He assumed his relationship with God was sterling. He figured the people around him were the ones with the problems, while he was right with God. Meanwhile, the tax collector lived with a sense of urgency. He realized the need to confess his sin to a holy God. He proved he feared the Lord.

One of the greatest challenges facing preaching today is the sense of complacency on the part of the preachers and the listeners.

Does the preacher walk into the pulpit aware of his own sin? Does he step into the pulpit overwhelmed by the grace of God and ready, each week, to communicate this grace with a sense of urgency? This sense of urgency is not displayed by speaking loudly, quickly, or by strolling around on the platform. Such urgency is evident when a simple man presents a simple message earnestly. Does the listener sit down in his chair bothered both by his sin and floored by the grace of God? Is she ready to listen to the gospel preached from whatever text her pastor is in?

I long to preach like the seventeenth-century pastor, Richard Baxter, who said, "I preached as never sure to preach again,

as a dying man to dying men." That is how I intend to preach every Sunday. Like a snake shedding unwanted skin, I am eager to shed the complacency that can seep into my thought life, a complacency that allows me to forget that I, too, am a sinner in need of the message of the Savior. Complacency leads me to forget that we are all dying. The clock is ticking. The future is coming. How will we live?

**We are supposed to listen  
to every sermon**

**as if we are in  
the emergency exit row.**

The church today needs Christians who can say, "I listened as never sure to listen again, as a dying man being spoken to by another dying man." Sermons are meant to remind us that this world is not all there is. Time is going by fast. Tomorrow is not guaranteed. In light of the immanence of death, complacency makes no sense, whether it is on the part of the preacher or the listener.

Do you listen to each sermon as if it were your last? Do you listen as a dying man listening to another dying man talk about life's most important truths? For six days a week the world is tempting us to ignore our sin. By God's grace, a biblical sermon will remind us of what is most urgent in life—confessing our sin and humbling ourselves before our Savior. One of the greatest challenges facing preaching today is complacency.

Sometimes on a plane I am seated in the emergency exit. If the plane crashes I have to be ready to help. I usually don't pay any attention to the safety instructions. But I do when I'm seated in the emergency exit row. In the case of disaster I need to be ready. And so when the flight attendant speaks, I listen.

Many of us listen to sermons as if we were in just any seat. We allow everything and anything to distract us. We tune the preacher out the way we tune the flight attendant out. No wonder so many are drifting from the church. They have lost a sense of urgency—if they ever had one! We are supposed to listen to every sermon as if we are in the emergency exit row.

The type of urgency I'm talking about is a work of the Holy Spirit. Pray that the Spirit would lead every Christian preacher to forget himself in the pulpit and give us the Word. Pray that, by the power of God, we would not be ashamed of the gospel but long to hear it again and again. Pray that the Lord would remove from our hearts a spirit of complacency and replace it with a spirit of urgency.

Until this happens, believers will continue to drift away from the churches they once called home. ■

~Aaron Menikoff

*This article is adapted from a sermon given on March 7, 2010*

# February 2012

	1	2	3	4
5 ▶ 6:00 pm Lord's Supper	8	9	10	11
12	15	16	17	18
19 ▶ 10:30 am Guest Preacher: Brad Thayer	22	23	24	25
26	29			
	7			
6	14			
13	21			
20 ▶ 12:00 pm RW&A Luncheon	28			
27				

## EVENTS ◀ ▶ BIRTHDAYS

### Churchwide ▼

February 5 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.

### Adults ▼

February 20 12:00 pm RW&A Luncheon

Everyone 50 and older is invited to the monthly RW&A luncheon. Bring a covered dish.

- |    |  |    |  |
|----|--|----|--|
| 1  | Bob McCallum<br>Blake Morgan<br>Emilee Morgan  | 16 | Amiee Hamby  |
| 2  | Pearlene Koenig<br>Bill Long<br>Jim Voyles   | 17 | Sandy Wellman  |
| 4  | Jeanette Ripley  | 19 | Mary Cherbonnier<br>Jacob Hall   |
| 6  | David Clark  | 20 | Jeff Case<br>Diane Neal<br>Sweden Swilley  |
| 7  | Tony Higgins   | 21 | Dorothy DeFreese   |
| 8  | Isabelle Carver<br>Sarah Lee Flint<br>Jenna Langmack<br>Mary Roth<br>Sarah Anne Voyles | 22 | Austin Nable<br>Larry Norwood<br>Khady Sy  |
| 9  | Richard Carron   | 23 | Mark Lamprecht   |
| 10 | Amy Brewer<br>Jackie Marler<br>Aimee Speas<br>Lincoln Stillwagon<br>Lynne Warren       | 24 | Marni Daniel<br>Tammy Glass<br>Doug Langmack<br>David Pattillo<br>Natalie Watson |
| 12 | Rick Roth<br>Taylor Wilkins<br>Dianne Williams   | 25 | Howard Kauffmann<br>Kerns Sage   |
| 15 | Lisa Lake  | 26 | Stacy Dennis<br>Paula Mosby  |
|    |  | 27 | Brent Reid   |
|    |  | 28 | Frances Skelton  |

# Knowing MVBC

**Knowing MVBC** 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 Structure: Leadership**
- **Knowing How to Be Involved: Discipling & Serving**

Anyone interested in membership or knowing more about life at Mount Vernon is invited to **Knowing MVBC**. All four sessions will be offered Sunday, March 4 (session 1 at 9:15 am in the Mount Vernon Room and sessions 2-4 starting at 12:15 pm in Room 232). Lunch will be provided.

You may sign up on the edge of the bulletin, by contacting the church office at 404-255-3133, or by email at [info@mvbchurch.org](mailto:info@mvbchurch.org).



*Mount Vernon*

BAPTIST CHURCH

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