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# PERSPECTIVE

THE MONTHLY JOURNAL OF MOUNT VERNON BAPTIST CHURCH



*Proverbs*  
Words on Family





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## STAFF > SERMON SCHEDULE

July 3	<b>Love Your Neighbor</b> <i>James 2:1-13</i>
July 10	<b>When God Hides His Face</b> <i>Psalms 44</i> Brad Thayer, Assistant Pastor
July 17	<b>Truly Believe</b> <i>James 2:14-26</i>
July 24	<b>When God Is Patient with Fools</b> <i>Psalms 74</i> Bryan Pillsbury, Associate Pastor
July 31	<b>Speak Less</b> <i>James 3:1-12</i>

## > FIGHTER VERSE

The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.  
Proverbs 18:10

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# Knowing the Body our newest members

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



**Steve & Kacy Chamblee**  
Caitlyn, Sophie



**Heidi Grothaus**



**Greg & Lauren Kail**



**Melissa Larkin**



**Tim Newlands**



**Nathan & Brandi Payne**



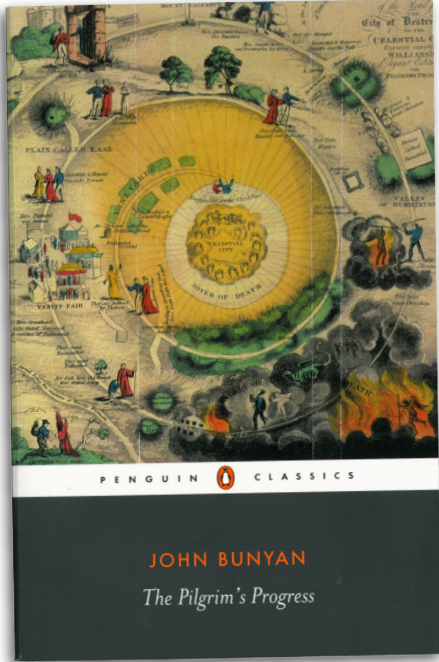
**Khady Sy**  
Rachid



**Robert & Carolyn Versele**  
Adalina, Caden

All of the above members were voted into membership at the Church in Conference on June 26, 2011.





# Pilgrim’s Progress

by John Bunyan

Reviewed by Priscilla Barry

“THEN I SAW THAT there was a way to hell, even from the Gates of Heaven...” says the dreamer when he sees the

man, Ignorance, bound, hand and foot, and carried to the door in the side of the hill at the Gates of Heaven. This is the end of Part I of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* by John Bunyan. There couldn’t be a more frightening ending to anyone’s life, to confidently stride up to the Gates of Heaven, only to be rejected. How do you guard against being Ignorant? Why are men ignorant of something as important as salvation? George Cheever tells us:

As long as men will continue to look at God’s truth through the medium of their own pride and prejudice, so long they will have mistaken views of God and eternity, so long will their own self-righteousness look better to them for a resting place than the glorious righteousness of Him, who of God is made unto us our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.<sup>1</sup>

In Ephesians 4, Paul refers to people who were darkened in their understanding because they hardened their hearts. So how do we acquire an understanding of God’s Word and dispel ignorance?

Before reaching the Gates of Heaven, Christian, the protagonist in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, and his traveling companion, Hope, discuss redemption with Ignorance. Ignorance says, “I believe that Christ died for sinners; and that I shall be justified before God from the Curse, through his gracious acceptance of my obedience to his Law. Or thus, Christ makes my Duties that are religious, acceptable to his Father by virtue of his Merits, and so shall I be justified” (149).

Isn’t this a common misconception: not Christ’s work alone for salvation, but a little of us also? Yet, in his letter to Titus, Paul says, “But when the kindness and love of God our Savior

appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:4-7). We need to be reading and studying the Bible with diligence; bringing to our quiet times, hearts softened and ready to receive God’s words of eternal life; lest we end our lives here on earth like Ignorance.

Charles Spurgeon, who many regard as one of the greatest preachers who ever lived, read *The Pilgrim’s Progress* over one hundred times. “Prick John Bunyan,” Spurgeon said, “and he bleeds Bible.” John Bunyan, a poor tinker with an insignificant education, was arrested in November of 1660 for preaching the Gospel without a license and failing to conform to worship as prescribed by the Church of England. Bunyan spent twelve years in prison and from the Bedford jail, he wrote *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, a book that has sold more copies than any book ever written, except the Bible. “A person who thoroughly understands *The Pilgrim’s Progress* is an accomplished theologian,” writes Maureen Bradley.<sup>2</sup> Know and understand *Pilgrim’s Progress* and you won’t be like Ignorance, who crossed the river of death easily by riding on Vain-hope’s ferry boat, and upon landing marched confidently up to the Gates of Heaven and knocked; but when he was asked for his certificate, he had none.

John Bunyan begins *The Pilgrim’s Progress* with an explanation of his motives and his methods, “The Author’s Apology for his Book.” It seems that some of his advisors felt unsure about allegory as a method of conveying the journey of the Christian life. However, there is nothing to fear from Bunyan’s allegory because Bunyan names his characters and the places around them after their symbolic meanings, so his readers are never left to wonder at his intentions; and where Bunyan’s 17<sup>th</sup>-century dialects and semantics might cause confusion, this Penguin Classic edition provides modern readers with plenty of notes and helps.

<sup>2</sup>Maureen L. Bradley, *The Pilgrim’s Progress Study Guide* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1994), 1.

The story begins with a person, who falls asleep in a den and begins to dream. In the dream, a man is crying, “What shall I do?” The man’s name is Graceless, but the reader doesn’t know this until later. Graceless’ distress, as he tells his wife and children, is that he has a tremendous burden on his back (conviction of sin); and he has discovered that the City of Destruction, where all of them live, will be “burned with fire from heaven.” Everyone either is or was once a citizen of the City of Destruction.

The man’s family and neighbors are convinced that he has lost his mind. He wanders about in the fields praying, reading his book, and occasionally crying out, “What must I do to be saved? He continues in this distress of mind knowing that he must leave the city, but uncertain which direction to run for safety, until he meets a man named Evangelist who gives him a parchment roll on which the words, “Fly from the wrath to come” are written. Graceless reads the parchment roll and then asks, “Whither must I fly?” Evangelist tells him, “Keep that light in your eye, and go up directly thereto, so shalt thou see the gate; at which when thou knockest, it shall be told thee what to do.” So the man runs toward the wicket gate with his fingers in his ears, screaming, “Life, life, eternal life.”

Now Graceless becomes Christian. As he “keeps the light in his eye and runs for the wicket-gate,” two townsmen follow him, Obstinate and Pliable, who are determined to bring him back. This is a spiritual journey in which Christ must take precedence over all. Bunyan is not suggesting that we are required to physically leave family and friends, but spiritually, we are all on a journey where our decision to follow after Christ may separate us from those we love most.

Christian invites Obstinate and Pliable to join him on his journey, Obstinate says, “What and leave our friends and our comforts behind us?” Obstinate is the hard ground personified in the Parable of the Sower. After some discussion, Pliable determines to stay with Christian; but when both men fall into the Slough of Despond, Pliable decides to return to the City of Destruction. With “a desperate struggle or two,” he gets out of the Slough and heads back home, leaving Christian hopelessly stuck in the Slough of Despond. Pliable is both the rocky and thorny soil in the Parable of the Sower. He is able to leave the Slough easily, because he is not weighed down by a burden on his back (conviction of sin) as Christian is. The man, Help, eventually rescues Christian, and asks him, “Why did you not look for the steps?” The steps in the Slough of Despond are the great and precious promises of God contained in the Bible.

A short distance from the Slough of Despond, Mr. Worldly Wiseman, who only uses religion to gratify his worldly needs, waylays Christian asking, “Who bid you go this way to be rid of your burden?” When Christian tells him that Evangelist indicated this way to him, Mr. Worldly Wiseman says, “I beshrew him for his counsel, there is not a more dangerous and troublesome way in the world, than this that unto which he hath directed thee...” Isn’t Christianity frequently ridiculed as old fashioned and confining by our own “Worldly Wisemen”—news commentators, journalists, politicians, neighbors, friends, etc.?

Mr. Worldly Wiseman advises Christian to go to Mr. Legality’s house by “yonder high hill,” but when Christian comes beside the hill, Mount Sinai, he is literally frozen with fear, lest it should fall on his head. Concerning Mr. Worldly Wiseman, Alexander Whyte cautions us:

Watch yourselves well, for you all have a large piece of this worldly-wise man in yourselves... It is a sure sign to you that you do not yet know the plague of your own heart, unless you know yourself to be a man more set upon the position and the praise that this world gives than you yet are on the position and the praise that come from God only. Set a watch on your own worldly heart. Watch and pray, lest you also enter into all Worldly-Wiseman’s temptation.<sup>3</sup>

Christian travels through many more places on his way to the Celestial City, which is where he is ultimately bound and meets many more people each one of them rendering flesh and blood to precepts in the Bible and helping us to see ourselves, others, and our conditions more clearly. If you haven’t traveled through The Valley of Humiliation, you will one day. Can you turn on your television or open a newspaper without seeing Mr. By-Ends, Mr. Hold-the-World, or Mr. Money-love? Then there’s Doubting Castle where the Giant Despair beats Christian and Hopeful. Every Christian knows these people or will know them either in someone else or in themselves. The roads that Christian travels are roads to places where every Christian is sure to go, though their experiences may not be exactly the same as another Christian.

Part II, of *Pilgrim’s Progress* begins when Christian’s wife, Christiana, and her four sons begin a pilgrim’s life and, following after Christian, journey through some of the same places but have different experiences and meet different people. What is the summation of the message in *Pilgrim’s Progress*?

If you are Christians then, be consistent. Be Christians out and out; Christians every hour, in every part, and in every matter. Beware of half-hearted discipleship, of compromise with evil, of conformity to the world, of trying to serve two masters—to walk in two ways, the narrow and the broad, at once. It will not do. Half-hearted Christianity will only dishonour God, while it makes you miserable.<sup>4</sup>

When you can’t see a book clearly, you put on a pair of reading glasses; and then the text is clearer. The book hasn’t changed at all; it isn’t any better than before; but your ability to see it has changed. Similar to a pair of reading glasses, a thorough knowledge of *Pilgrim’s Progress* doesn’t change the Bible in any way, but *Pilgrim’s Progress* can help the sin-blurred eyes of a Christian see the precepts in the Bible more clearly. *The Pilgrim’s Progress* is Bunyan at his best and “what marks Bunyan’s most successful writing is his ability to convey spiritual truth with the force of felt experience.<sup>5</sup> If you haven’t read *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, get a copy and read it. You will never see yourself, your situations, or people around you in the same way again. If you have read it, read it again; it is never time wasted.■

<sup>3</sup>Alexander Whyte, *First Series Bunyan Characters*. (DoDo Press, 2009), 60-61.

<sup>4</sup>Horatius Bonar, *Eternal Blamelessness in Light & Truth, Vol. III* (<http://horatiusbonar.com>), 319.

<sup>5</sup>Roger Pooley, Introduction. *The Pilgrim’s Progress* by John Bunyan (New York: Penguin Classics, 2008), xix.





# Family Ministry Coordinator: Doug Young

by Aaron Menikoff

STARTING IN JULY, Doug Young will join our church staff as our Family Ministry Coordinator. His primary responsibility will be to serve our preschool and elementary ministries. His title is Family Ministry Coordinator because we want to communicate our passion as a church to minister to families.

For over two years, Terry Earl has been serving us. She has done a wonderful job. The Lord has used her to remind us how important it is not only to help our children know God's Word with their mind, but to love the Lord with their hearts. Of course, only the Holy Spirit can make this happen, but Terry has challenged teachers and parents alike to model this kind of love and passion for the little ones in our midst. Please know that Terry and her husband, Bob, are not leaving the church! For the next few weeks she will help Doug transition into his position. Please go out of your way to encourage her by thanking her for the work she has done in the life of our congregation.

You may know Doug since he and his wife, Alicia, are already members of MVBC. They have four children:

Sadie, Andrew, Noel, and Providence. Doug originally came to Atlanta to work as a principal at the Atlanta Classical Christian Academy. He earned a divinity degree from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky and went on to become an apprentice in Children's and Family Ministry at Bethlehem Baptist Church—the very church that produced the curriculum we now use in our preschool and elementary ministries. Doug has spent most of his career serving as either a teacher or a principal. But he comes to us with a heart for the local church.

His primary responsibility will be coordinating our preschool and elementary ministries. However, we want him to be giving attention to how we can better equip dads and moms to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Please pray for the Earl and Young families during this period of transition. And continue to pray that we do all we can as a church to share the gospel and our lives with the children and families of MVBC and our community. ■

# Deacon Nomination Update

from the Elders

The Elders want to give you an update on the process of nominating men to serve as Deacons of a particular ministry. Remember that the new leadership structure has Elders as overseeing the ministries of the church and Deacons that will be task-oriented. For example, there will be a Deacon of Finance and a Deacon of the Lord's Supper.

The Elders have received your recommendations and are prayerfully considering them. We are still working on the nominations. Once you receive them, you will have at least one month to consider them and give feedback to the Elders. You will then be asked to vote at a specially-called Church in Conference in August. Upon your approval, the men will assume their responsibilities immediately.

Thank you for your prayers in this process. We would encourage you to start praying about where you could help serve in a particular ministry of the church. The Deacons and Ministry Team Coordinators are going to need your help. Thank you!

# Before You Give Up...



In July, Pastor Aaron will continue an eight-part sermon series through the book of James.

Each sermon will be available online the Monday after it is delivered through the Mount Vernon Podcast on iTunes, in *The Courier*, and on the church's web site at [www.mvbchurch.org](http://www.mvbchurch.org).

Sermons will also be available on CD for \$5 per copy.





But as David Brooks recently wrote, times are changing:

*For most of television history, sitcoms have been about families. From “The Dick Van Dyke Show” to “All in the Family” to “The Cosby Show,” TV shows have generally featured husbands and wives, parents and kids.*

*But over the past several years, things have shifted. Today’s shows are often about groups of unrelated friends who have the time to lounge around apartments, coffee shops and workplaces exchanging witticisms about each other and the passing scene.*

By and large, Americans are getting married later, having fewer kids, and are less interested in watching moms and dads navigate the travails of parenthood. Shows that do center on raising kids have a different agenda: normalizing alternative lifestyles. *Big Love* and *Sister Wives*, for example, feature polygamous relationships. The hit show, *Modern Family*, includes two men raising a baby. Don’t expect New York to be the last state to redefine marriage—our neighbors are less convinced than ever that marriage ought to be between one man and one woman.

Sadly, the vices of our culture often become the sins of our churches. Unless we take our cues from Scripture, our patterns of dating, marriage, and parenting will be shaped by the world’s priorities.

It was 1995, a few days before I was to be married, when a friend came up to me to express his reservations: “How can you get married when you’ve never lived together? Surely you need to figure out whether the two of you are compatible.” To him this made perfect sense. Hadn’t I read *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*?

I wish I had known what to say that day. I wish I had told him that living together would never prove that we were compatible. I wish I had told him that men and women are not compatible because we are all sinners. I wish I had told him the Gospel is the only hope for a good marriage. Only as I learn to love my wife as Christ loves the church will our marriage thrive. Instead, I think I told him to shut up. It wasn’t my finest moment!

Fifteen years, three cities, and three kids later, I know a lot more about marriage than I did that day. My wife has seen me at my worst. We both testify that without the Gospel, our marriage would be toast. We’ve endured our share of fights. We know that good communication skills don’t grow on trees. We still have tons to learn.

More than anything, Deana and I are thankful that God is not silent when it comes to marriage and parenting. He has spoken about our family, and He still speaks into our family. We need to turn to His Word with prayers of desperation for the wisdom to live together in love and holiness.

Perhaps you picked up this article because you are having some problems with your family. Your marriage may be breaking up. Your kids may be rebellious. Perhaps you are looking for a little help, some wisdom to tell you how you can take the next step. Perhaps you simply want something to get through the next day! Be encouraged, the fact that you are reading an article on marriage and the family is evidence you want things to change.

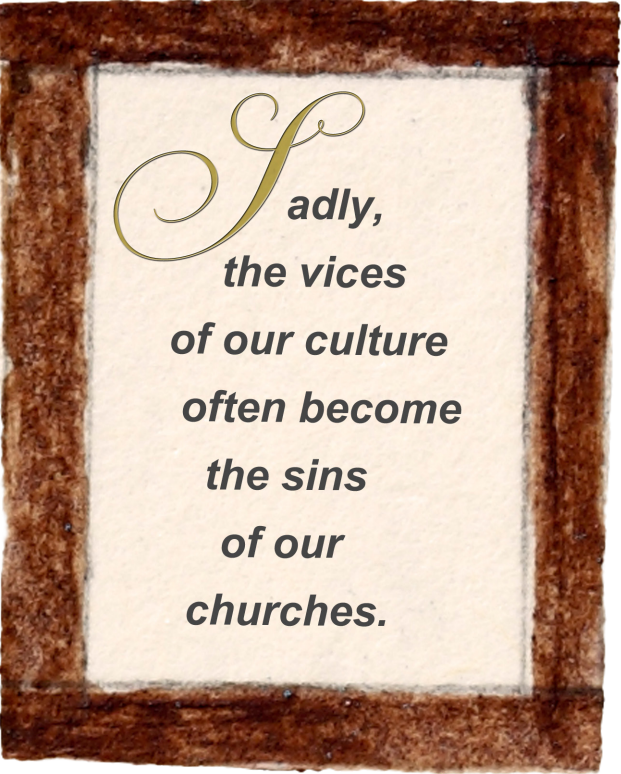
**The entire Bible is about marriage and the family.**

Have you noticed that the Bible isn’t broken up into subjects, like an encyclopedia? Though there is no single chapter on “marriage,” or “parenting,” the Bible still has a lot of wisdom on the topic.

In one sense, the whole Bible is a story about marriage. The Israelites were told more than once that God is their husband (Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 3:14). Sadly, Israel was the unfaithful spouse. But God never turned His back on His wife. In that sense, the Bible is all about God’s faithfulness to His unfaithful bride. Is it any wonder that Jesus presents Himself as the bridegroom (Matthew 9:15; Mark 2:19)? God came to be with His people. Fast forward to Ephesians 5:25, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy.” Wow! Double-click on that one verse, and the whole storyline of the Bible pops up. God is the good and faithful husband to His unfaithful people.

Then again, we could say that the entire Bible is about fatherhood. As far back as Exodus 4:22, Israel is described as God’s firstborn son. Again and again in the Psalms, God is described as a father. To David He is the “father of the fatherless” (Psalm 68:5). Elsewhere, He is called “my Father, my God, the Rock of my Savior” (Psalm 89:26). In the New Testament, it is the Father who adopted us into His family (Ephesians 1:5). It is our heavenly Father who disciplines us (Hebrews 12:7). The Father of Jesus Christ is the Father of every believer. Do you want to know what it looks like to be a father? Look to your heavenly Father.

All that sounds nice. But does the Bible get more specific about marriage and parenthood than that? Sure it does! Proverbs is a great introduction to what being a godly husband, a godly wife, and a godly parent looks like. Most of Proverbs was written by a father to his son. That father,





Solomon, taught his son what to look for in a wife—and what to avoid. And he gave him some very basic tips on parenting. Proverbs is not a comprehensive textbook on marriage and the family—it is a lot more than that. But there is divine wisdom for the family here that we need. But beware! Some of the principles about family life are not appreciated by the world in which we live. They may not even be appreciated by some of the people in our churches! But we must let the Bible speak for itself.

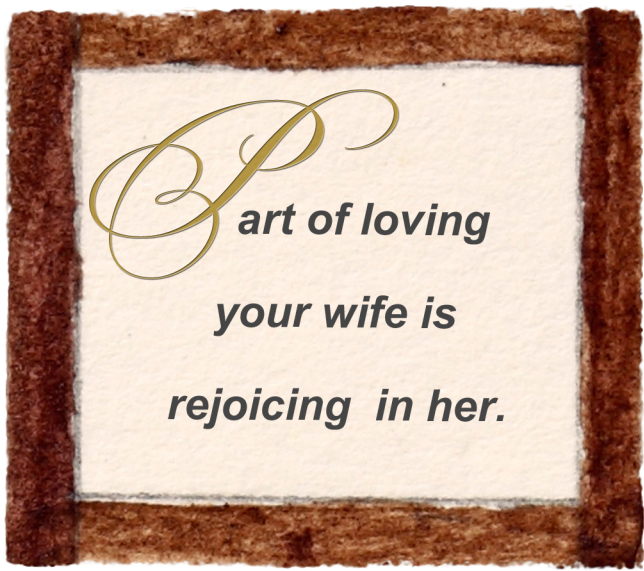
I pray that as you read these words, you would heed Paul’s command: “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2). As we explore some passages from Proverbs, let us read with what Charles Bridges described as a “pondering mind” and a “praying heart.” There are many lessons on marriage and the family in the book of Proverbs. I want to look at three.

**Lesson one: Husbands are to love their wives.**

Perhaps this lesson seems so obvious it doesn’t need to be stated. I disagree. God demands that a husband love his wife. The love portrayed in a romantic comedy pales in comparison to the tenacious, passionate commitment a husband is to show his wife. This is true love. A husband is to be singularly devoted to his wife. Nothing is to distract him from exalting her. She is not an idol to be worshipped, but she is a gift from God to be treasured. This is the teaching of Proverbs.

We cannot take it for granted that a husband will love his wife. Too many men see their marriage as either a mistake or an inconvenience. They fail to understand that God not only ordained the marriage, but he has provided the tools necessary to make that marriage great. It is tragic when a husband refuses to love his wife.

*Under three things the earth trembles, under four it cannot bear up: a servant who becomes king, a fool who is full of food, an unloved woman who is married, and a maidservant who displaces her mistress* (Prov. 30:21-23).



A husband may refuse to love his wife. But in so doing, he is going against the very grain of God’s creation. God designed husbands to love their wives. Love is a choice. Love is the choice exercised by Hosea when he chose to love Gomer. The LORD told the prophet, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes” (Hosea 3:1). The nation of Israel loved pastries instead of their Maker and Redeemer! Yet God chose to love them. Gomer had turned to the arms of other men! Yet Hosea was called to love her. Husbands, you are called to love your wife.

Husbands, do you want a disappointing evening? Then go home and say to your wife, “Darling, today I don’t really want to love you, but I *choose* to love you.” Love may be a choice, and at times it will feel like little more than a choice, but if your love for your wife is characterized by gritting your teeth, you are missing the point. Part of loving your wife is rejoicing in her. You aren’t to love her grudgingly, but willingly.

*May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer—may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love* (Prov. 5:19).

Husbands are to “be captivated” by their wives—thrilled and excited by them. Maybe you aren’t feeling it. There will be plenty of times we don’t feel it. We are sinners, easily distracted from joyfully loving our spouses by our own deep-seated sin. So what should you do when you “aren’t feeling it”? Pray. Ask the Lord to do a work deep within you. Ask Him to give you the affections for your wife you know you should have. Keep praying. And then start living out those affections. They will come.

Many foolish husbands have had a hard time understanding why their spouse was so upset to discover he’d piddled with pornography. “It’s just pictures,” he protested. They fail to see that this biblical call to joyfully love their spouse is more than the occasional bunch of roses, dinner and a movie, or weekend away. God wants him to be so satisfied, so captivated, so intoxicated by his wife that he will not be enslaved by the images of other women.

Husbands, sin will try to convince you that the woman in the office, the woman on your computer, or the woman in that advertisement is more captivating than your wife. This is a lie. The most captivating woman in your life is the woman who said “I do.” Remember Solomon’s words: “The lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword” (Prov. 5:3-4).

Love your wife. Rejoice in your wife. Thank God for her. Thank God that in his grand design he gave her to you as a good gift from above.

A husband who passionately loves his wife will praise her. He will not remain silent. Proverbs 31 is all about an excellent wife, a woman of noble character. She is

praised by her family and, most importantly, by her husband:

*Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: “Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.” Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate* (Prov. 31:28-31).

Did you catch who praised her? The children called their mother blessed, and the dad praised her. He described her as the very best. I’m sure those kids were watching dad. “What would he say about mom?” They got to hear their father praise his wife. Other wives are good, but she surpasses them all. How can this be? Because *that* woman is God’s gift to *that* man—and he has rightly discerned that there is no woman on the face of the planet who could ever mean as much to him. So he praises her.

Husbands, turn a blind eye to the media’s picture of the perfect wife. The perfect wife is not Donna Reed. The perfect wife is not Claire Huxtable. The perfect wife is the wife God gave you. Husbands, love your wives.

If you are reading this and you know that you have not loved your wife the way you should, there is only one thing to do: talk to her! Confess where you have failed without bringing up where she has failed. Don’t just say that you will do better, tell your wife *how* you will do better. It may mean seeking counsel together from an older, godly couple or a pastor. It may mean carving out time to read the Word and pray together. It may mean a weekend away to reinvest in the marriage. Be specific, be practical, and don’t let a day go by without finding a way to let your wife know that you love her.

**Lesson two: Women are to see marriage and motherhood as a noble calling.**

Men particularly struggle with loving their wives. I think that is why Paul made it so clear that a husband is to love his wife. It is easy for work, sports, chores around the house, and ungodly expectations to drive a wedge in the marriage.

Women particularly struggle with seeing marriage as a noble calling. This goes all the way back to the Fall. God told Adam’s wife that as a result of her sin the pain of childbearing would be increased. In a fallen world motherhood is difficult—so is the marriage that leads to motherhood. From that day, women would struggle with the role God assigned wives as a helpmate to their spouse.

True, not every woman is called to serve as a wife and mother. For that matter, not every man is called to be a husband and father. Those Christians who are single are actually encouraged by Paul to remain that way, “It is good for a man not to marry” (1 Corinthians 7:1). Think of all the good you can do for the kingdom if you are unmarried. This may be of little comfort to those women who are longing for a husband. Pray that you would be content in your circumstances. God is good, and he will provide exactly what you need so that you can serve him the best.

Regardless of whether you are married or not, marriage is a noble calling. The book of Proverbs has nothing but

positive things to say about a godly wife. Proverbs 12:4, “A wife of noble character is her husband’s crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones.” A godly woman is like a crown adorning her husband’s head. Our modern sensibilities may chafe at these words. “How dare a woman be described as a crown!” But remember, Solomon was writing to his young son. He wanted him to marry a woman who loved the Lord. Such a woman will be good for him. “Pick a woman who loves the Lord more than she loves you, and you will have found a good wife.” That is what Solomon is saying here. A husband should prize the character of his wife above all things. People’s attention should be drawn to her not because of her body, but because of her heart.

Women, remember that this is what makes you valuable in the eyes of godly men. It is not your hair, or your attire. It is not your body or your jewelry. A godly man will value your heart. Find a man who loves the Lord more than he loves you and you will find a man who cares about your godliness more than your outward appearance. This is a man worth getting to know!

God gave Adam a wife because he needed a “suitable helper.” God knew Adam needed the love and support of a wife. Her role was not subservient to Adam, but it was unique. Adam had the responsibility to lead. She had a unique calling to follow. This is a glorious and noble calling. How noble? Proverbs 31:10-12 gives us an idea:

*A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.*

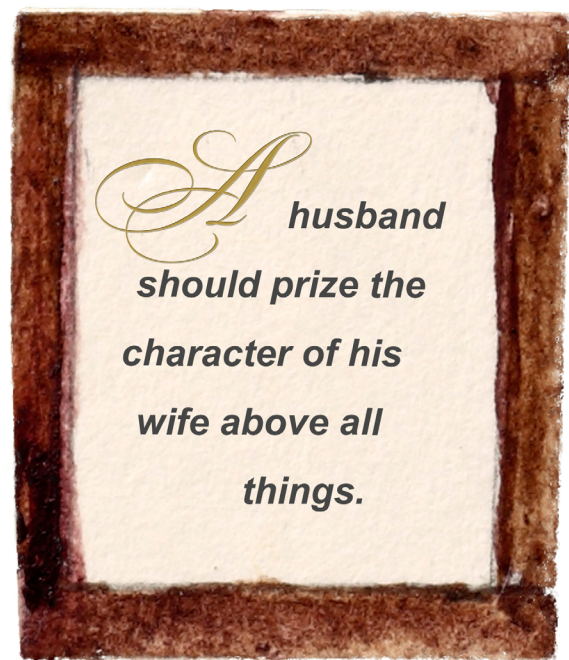
Again, it is not that the husband is more important than the wife. But they have different roles in the marriage. In the case of Proverbs 31, the husband had a position of leadership in the city. His daily responsibilities took him outside the home. He had a seat among the elders of the land (31:23). Certainly his work was important. This is a descriptive passage. In other words, we are learning what this marriage was like. We learn that the husband had responsibilities outside the home. We can’t take this text and conclude a woman is prohibited from having responsibilities outside the home. That’s not the point.

Here is the point: though the husband was known and well-respected as a leader in the community, the wife was known as an amazing woman with a calling just as important:

*She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands. She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar. She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls. She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard. She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks. She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night* (Prov. 31:13-18).

The husband may have been caring for the needs of the community-at-large, that may have been his calling, but the wife was doing important work, caring for the needs of the home. She was a hard-working, industrious woman. She had the noble calling of keeping the home running while the husband had different work.





This Proverbs 31 wife is not lazy. Nor is she a woman who laments being at home. Instead, she sees the home as ground zero for a fruitful ministry. Her first priority is her husband; verse 12 makes that clear, “She brings him good, not harm.” Her second priority is her household. Verse 15, “She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls.” Her third priority is the church and community. Proverbs 31:20, “She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.”

A Proverbs 31 wife is available to minister in all these spheres because her central focus is the home. It is not easy to take the circumstances of Proverbs 31, an agrarian world, and apply them to the twenty-first century. But the principle works in any century: a godly woman values a home-centered ministry. Her first and primary calling is to her husband and household.

Many women come to texts like these with a very specific question, “Am I at liberty to work outside the home?” They want to know if the Bible allows for wives and mothers to have a career. We certainly do not find in Scripture that wives and mothers are prohibited from working outside the home. What we do find, however, is a pattern of wives and mothers who have enough time to serve their husbands, their households, and their church. It is a pattern reiterated in Titus 2, written centuries after Proverbs:

*Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God (Titus 2:3-5).*

Nothing in this passage prohibits a wife from working outside the home, but Paul does give us the impression that the home is ground zero for fruitful ministry! Carolyn McCulley, in her excellent book, *Radical Womanhood*, gives

a concise explanation of the point of this passage from Titus:

*The point of being a keeper at home is to provide a haven for a godly family to thrive (a requirement for church leadership, according to 1 Timothy 3:1-5), to offer hospitality to fellow Christians and non-Christians alike, and to provide a place for the church to meet. Even though the early church met primarily in homes, even today our homes can operate as an extension of the larger Sunday gathering when we meet in small groups or Bible studies. Hospitality remains a command for all believers throughout the ages—“Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality” (Romans 12:13).*

Sadly, many women choose to work—at least in part—because they are looking for an identity outside of the home. They have fallen prey to the lie that the only way to be complete is to work for an income. Is this because they do not see the value of choosing to work *from* home? Does a home-centered ministry somehow seem to them to be second best?

There are many reasons a mother may choose to work outside the home. I am not trying to say that the only reason some mothers work is to find their identity. I am simply saying that if this is why *you* are working outside the home, this is a bad reason.

What if you are a woman who is staying at home, but you are struggling with feeling under-appreciated and, frankly, under-utilized? Don’t believe the lie. Tending to your home is a wonderful career. McCulley offered this encouragement to you:

*Your daily life may consist of dozens of repetitive tasks that feel so mundane and irrelevant. You kiss boo-boos, you make dinner, you do dishes, you answer a homework question, you drive to soccer practice, you read a goodnight story, you do laundry, you make dinner again. Unglamorous daily tasks and unimportant in the big picture, you may think.*

*This is absolutely not true! You are engaged in spiritual warfare, battling against beliefs and philosophies that slander God’s name and tarnish His gifts to us. You are standing against those who believe heinous lies, like “the most merciful thing that a large family does to one of its infant members is to kill it.” By giving life and nurturing life, you are reflecting the life-giving characteristics of our holy God! Made in His image, you are reflecting Him when you care for the lives He has created.*

And, finally, what if you are working and you are wondering if you are doing the right thing? You hear these words about the home being ground zero for fruitful ministry and you wonder if that means you should be home full-time. I’d encourage you to talk to your husband. Ask questions like, “Why am I working? What are our goals? Is my work keeping us from doing things we think the Lord, in His Word, is calling us to do?” It is not sin to work outside the home, but it is sin to neglect the home, so check your own heart and pray for wisdom—God will surely provide it. Whatever you conclude, remember, marriage and motherhood are a noble calling.

**Lesson three: Parents are to discipline their children.**

Many husbands particularly struggle to love their wives. Many wives struggle to see marriage and motherhood as a noble calling. And many parents struggle to discipline their children. And yet, when it comes to parenting, discipline is not to be neglected. Proverbs 13:1, “A wise man heeds his father’s instruction, but a mocker does not listen to rebuke.”

Growing up, we had a garden in the backyard where we grew tomatoes. Every plant needed to grow along a stake. When the plants are very young, the stake protects them from strong wind. When the plants mature, the stake provides support when the fruit gets heavy.

Like a stake in the ground, discipline helps a child when he is young and old. Proverbs 22:6, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” This kind of discipline is hard, and many parents fail to do it and most, if not all, parents fail to do it as well as they should.

Discipline is not to be confused with abuse. We have all read horrific accounts of parents who treated their children like animals. They abused them mentally, emotionally, and physically. The Bible is against such treatment of our children. What the Bible calls for, instead, is measured correction that is always done out of love and not anger. If you are angry and you are about to discipline your child—stop. “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

But the Bible says that if we love our children, we will discipline them. Proverbs 13:24, “He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.” If we love our children, we will consistently, gently, and firmly discipline them.

Discipline can be inconvenient. There are many reasons to avoid it. You have to stop what you are doing and take time to address your child. It requires conflict; children often get upset and let you know! Some parents fear it will shatter their children’s self-esteem. But if done correctly, discipline will encourage your child, because it serves as an occasion for you to reinforce just how much you love your child and want him or her to succeed.

The book of Proverbs presents us with essentially two goals when it comes to discipline. Don’t think of them as separate goals, think of them as two sides of the same coin.

***The first goal is training.*** We discipline our children to train them how to live productive lives in a dangerous world. Again, Proverbs 22:6, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

When I was a young boy, about five or six, I remember carrying wood into the house from the garage where my dad was working. My arms were loaded, and I was given the instruction not to run. But I was Superman. As soon as I turned the corner out of sight from my dad, I began to fly. I failed to notice my dad could see me through the window! He disciplined me out of love for my safety. He trained me to be careful in this dangerous world.

This kind of training is very important. Whether it’s a toddler being trained not to touch a socket or a teenager being trained not to speed while driving, discipline is a powerful and biblical tool to train our kids to live productive lives in a dangerous world. But training is only one side of the coin.

***The second goal of discipline is teaching.*** More specifically, teaching the Gospel. Proverbs 22:15, “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.” The problem is not our children’s misbehavior—the problem is their heart. Biblical discipline gets to a child’s heart.

Remember my days as Superman? My father protected me from a broken arm or a splinter in the eye. And I’m thankful for that. But my dad isn’t a Christian, and he didn’t see discipline as an opportunity to teach the Gospel. My real problem was not that I risked getting hurt. My real problem was the folly, the sin bound up in my heart. I had a defiant and proud attitude. I didn’t think I needed to listen to my dad, because I didn’t think I needed to listen to God. I thought I knew better. A splinter in the eye may send me to the hospital, but pride will send me to hell.

So when a parent disciplines a child, the goal isn’t merely to train him how to obey rules. A Christian parent is teaching his children to understand the seriousness of sin, the holiness of God, the necessity of punishment, and the promise of forgiveness. Parents, when we discipline our kids, we want to do more than *train* them how to live. We want to *teach* them the Gospel. We don’t want well-behaved kids who are going to hell. We want humble kids who love Jesus. Proverbs 23:14 says, “Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.” This is no promise that well-disciplined child will become a Christian. But it is a pattern to follow. As we plant seeds of the Gospel through discipline, God may cause those seeds to grow.

Parents, this idea of discipline as training and teaching should remind us that there is no such thing as a small sin. We are to discipline our kids because we want them to understand that sin has consequences mom and dad can’t take care of. Our children need Jesus, who died on the cross for sinners.

If you want more information about discipline read Tedd Tripp’s *Shepherding a Child’s Heart* and Ginger Plowman’s *Wise Words for Moms*. There are many excellent resources to help us see what the Bible has to say about raising kids.

At Mount Vernon we aren’t trying to build *Leave it to Beaver* families. We don’t want to take our cues from the culture. We want to see God’s Spirit build biblical families in our midst where dads, moms, and children are each pointed to Jesus Christ.

As our culture moves away from biblical definitions of marriage and the family, it is vital for the church to speak with clarity and compassion on a topic near and dear to all of us.■

~Aaron Menikoff

*This article was adapted from a sermon delivered by Pastor Aaron on October 24, 2010.*



# July 2011

1 Rockbridge Day Camp		2	
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29 Youth Basketball Camp		30	
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Independence Day - Office Closed		3	
6:00 pm Lord's Supper		10	
10:30 am Guest Preacher: Brad Thayer		17	
7:00 pm Ice Cream Social		24	
10:30 am Guest Preacher: Bryan Pillsbury		31	
12:00 pm Directory Pictures		4:30 pm Quarterly Church in Conference	

## EVENTS ◀ ▶ BIRTHDAYS

### Churchwide ▼

July 31 12:00 pm Pictorial Directory Pictures  
4:00 pm Church in Conference  
Join us at the next regularly scheduled Church in Conference where we will consider many matters related to the life of Mount Vernon.

### Children ▼

July 17 7:00 pm Ice Cream Social  
The children's ministry invites everyone to attend a homemade ice cream social immediately following the evening service.

### Recreation ▼

July 4-8, 11-15 Rockbridge Day Camp  
The goal of Rockbridge is to use nature, adventure, and recreation as tools to build and strengthen our children's relationships with friends, family, and ultimately, Jesus Christ. Brochures with registration details are available in brochure racks around the building.

July 25-29 Youth Basketball Camp  
Boys and girls, ages 7-14, can come and learn the fundamentals of basketball and receive a daily lesson from the Bible.

### Students ▼

July 17-23 MissionLab  
The students will be partnering with New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and working in construction projects, sports camps, and backyard Bible clubs.

1	Bubba Holmes	18	Amy Bodor
	Marie Tingle	19	Montine Alexander
2	Gay Cooper		Hazel Kath
3	Ralph Haines		Todd Mattera
4	Ruth Edwards	20	Vic Moore
5	Danny Brundage		Kevin Smith
	Wink Laney	21	David Carnes
6	Elsie Howard		Connie Moore
	Rob Meadows		Paige Pattillo
7	Lisa Kubes	22	Mark Henderson
	Ann McCallum		Courtney O'Neal
	Michael Mosby		Rhonwyn Ryan
8	Joel Roberts	23	Tom Howard
9	Tricia Carnes	24	Andres Rivera
	Aaron Henderson	25	Jonathan Thurman
10	Andrew Armstrong		Kevin Vaughter
	Bob Flint	26	Brandy Meadows
13	Sharon Donahue	27	Rita Caldwell
	Joe Drexler		Dee Linker
14	Suzanne Millen	28	Anthony Blalock
15	Kay Reagan		Lena Hocker
	Mel Wakefield		John McCoy
16	Cory Blackburn		Bradley Thomas
	Jim Fleming	29	Joyce Williams
	Yvonne Holtzclaw	31	Margot Dawkins
17	Cam Cherbonnier		

### Knowing MVBC: The Membership Class

is a four session course that introduces you to life at Mount Vernon, covering the following topics:

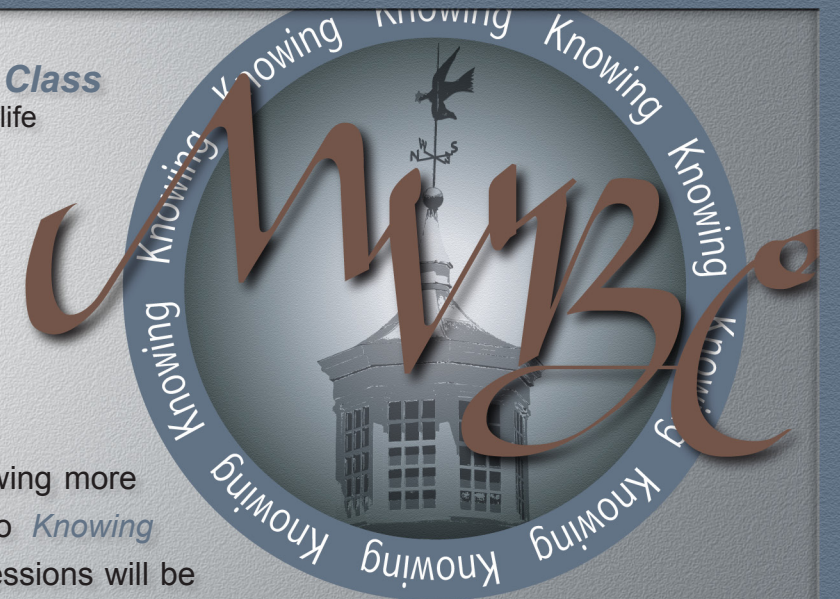
Knowing Our Commitments: Church Covenant

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, August 7 (session 1 at 9:15 am in the Mount Vernon Room and sessions 2-4 starting at 12:00 pm in Room 232). Lunch will be provided. You may sign up on the edge of the bulletin or by contacting the church office at 404-255-3133 or by email at [info@mvbchurch.org](mailto:info@mvbchurch.org).







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