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PERSPECTIVE

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PLEASING PEOPLE



PLEASING GOD



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SERMON SCHEDULE

June 2
A Boy Who would Be King
1 Samuel 16:1–18:16

June 16
A New Beginning
2 Samuel 1:1–5:16

June 30
The God of All Comfort
2 Corinthians 1:3–11
Guest Preacher: Bert Daniel

June 9
A Dynasty Destroyed
1 Samuel 18:17–31:13

June 23
A King Who Stays
2 Samuel 5:17–8:18

FIGHTER VERSE

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

Ephesians 6:10–11

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the KINGMAKER

12 STUDIES THROUGH 1 & 2 SAMUEL

For the remainder of the Summer, Pastor Aaron will continue a twelve-part sermon series through the books of 1 & 2 Samuel.

Each sermon will be available the Monday after it is delivered through the Mount Vernon Podcast on iTunes and on the church's website at www.mvbchurch.org.

Sermons are also available on CD for \$5 a copy.

ALWAYS TRUE

God's Promises When Life Is Hard

JAMES
MACDONALD



Always True is a video Bible study that reveals that God loves making promises to His children and always keeps His word. The Women's Ministry will be hosting a Wednesday morning Bible study June 12–July 31 (except July 3) at 9:45 am in room 232. Cost for the workbook is \$12.

Childcare will be offered for children 3 and under.

To register or for further information, please contact Donna Clark at clarkdj50@yahoo.com.

A Culture of Discipleship

by Brad Thayer



TRUE STORY: A YOUNG COUPLE, bright-eyed and hopeful about their future, is married. But their hopes were hard to attain when constant arguing marked their first year of marriage. One night, in the midst of another argument, the wife, unbeknownst to her husband, called a close friend in tears to share her struggles and frustrations. She needed a sympathetic voice to offer godly counsel and comfort. Thirty minutes later, the husband's cell phone rang. He answered it with a normal tone but slightly surprised that his close friend would be calling so late at night. His friend on the other line said, "I don't know what is going on. But you need to reconcile with your wife, and meet me in the morning so we can talk about it. I love you, and am praying for you." The husband was stunned, embarrassed, and humbled that someone would be willing to boldly speak into his marriage when he most needed it.

I believe these types of relationships are all too rare in many Bible-believing, gospel-preaching, Jesus-loving churches. Churches do many things right, but they fail to emphasize and model the biblical expectation and command to love and admonish one another in ways that publicly testify to the power of the gospel. I believe, along with the Elders, that these types of relationships ought to be normal in the life of Mount Vernon as we, the members, work toward creating a culture of discipleship. This is vital to the church's spiritual health and corporate evangelism.

Before I explain exactly what I mean, I need to preface these comments by noting, first, this isn't a "flashy or cutting edge" ministry topic. Rather, it's a topic related to faithfulness. Are we as a church being faithful to make disciples amongst one another? In addition, it's difficult to measure how effective we are at doing this. It's easy to look at institutional measures of "success"—attendance and offering—and I think equating those measurements with faithful discipleship is one of our biggest temptations, especially being located in the shadows of a number of mega-churches. But do we know how to measure spiritual growth in one another's lives? Are the members of Mount Vernon characterized by the fruit of the Spirit and Christ-like character?

DEFINING DISCIPLING

Let me be really clear on what I mean by creating a culture of *discipleship*. Jesus commands us in the Matthew 28:18–20 to "make disciples." We know this as the Great Commission and may think that it is only about evangelism. We know that Jesus' followers are to make more Jesus-followers. But it is more encompassing than that. Jesus explains what he means by making disciples when he says "and teaching them to observe [or obey, depending on your translation] all that I have commanded you." In other words, disciple-making is about teaching and modeling what it looks like to obey Jesus, to keep the commands of Scripture. That's the goal of discipling—people who read and hear the commands and imperatives placed on their

lives by God and seek to obey them, not perfectly but faithfully. The friend who called the husband had the goal of seeking to ensure that he was loving his wife "as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25).

DEFINING CULTURE

Nothing novel or innovative has been said about discipleship up to this point. Many churches will heartily agree with what I've written. What may, however, sound slightly different is the Elders' desire to see a *culture* of discipleship. To understand this, first consider what the alternative is to creating a culture. It is to have *program* of discipleship—participation in Sunday School, small groups, or a mentorship structure, for example. Growing up in church, I remember going back to church an hour before the evening service for "discipleship training." The perception was that this was for people who were really serious about learning the Bible. That is not what I'm talking about with creating a culture of discipleship. Those programs may be fine and can be a means of creating the culture but, in and of themselves, they are a programmatic approach to discipleship.

What I mean by culture is that it is the *norm* of Mount Vernon to think and relate to one another with the specific goal of discipling in mind—teaching and modeling obedience to Jesus. It is the normal expectation to have relationships marked by love, encouragement, and accountability.

To have a culture of discipleship is to say this is what we *value*. In creating this culture, it has to be clear that this is not simply what the Elders value, but what the entire congregation values. The culture is only going to be reflective of what we, collectively or at least the majority of us, value. So the Elders desire and pray that the congregation values the importance of discipling.

If you want to know if it is something we value, then simply listen to our conversations. Values are communicated through words, and anything that is highly valued is something you talk about. Every family, for example, has things that it values. That's what takes priority and what the parents ensure is regularly taught to their children. So what are our words—what is our language like—as a church? What we talk about in our gatherings and in our small talk is simply an indicator of our values. So if discipling and discipling relationships are what we collectively value, then you'll hear it in our conversations.

Hopefully, that gives you some idea of what I mean by discipling and a "culture of discipleship." It is simply the ethos, the tenure and tone, of Mount Vernon for members to have spiritually-intentional relationships marked by love, encouragement, and accountability; relationships where the Spirit of God unites us through prayer and the Bible.

HOW TO FOSTER DISCIPLING RELATIONSHIPS

But how do you create these relationships? It is one thing to desire them. It is something entirely different to have and initiate them. Part of

me bemoans any list of things to do because these relationships are not created through a series of steps. There is no 12-step plan to implement. Part of the way of creating this culture is not merely through instruction (as in the case of this article) but example as people who have had them seek to foster them among others. Nevertheless, let me mention a few things that I've observed in the past decade that are present in these relationships.

Presence

Attendance isn't the end-all-be-all. A culture of discipleship isn't built merely on presence. But mere or scant presence will be a hindrance to it. The Elders cannot shepherd people who are not here, and you cannot build relationships if you are not regularly present. Just to be clear on what we mean by "regular presence": The expectation is that you are in regular attendance of the Sunday morning worship service and one evening service.

Intentionality

You don't accidentally fall into these relationships. The friend who called the husband to confront him didn't begin the conversation with small talk or pleasantries. It was an intentional phone call with an intentional message—reconciliation and accountability.

Here are some examples of relational intentionality. Let the first comments after Sunday School or the worship service be comments of things that challenged or encouraged you from the teaching. We're happy to participate publicly when a teacher asks a question, but do we turn to our neighbor afterwards to say, "That was encouraging. I was challenged by what he said on this point." In addition, be intentional with your current friendships. You can have close friends in the church and not be intentional in your discipleship. Having close friends you regularly socialize and vacation with does not mean you have spiritually-intentional relationships. We need to be able to identify the difference. Consider how Solomon described friendship:

A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. (Prov. 18:24)

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy....Do not forsake your friend and your father's friend, and do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity. Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother who is far away. (Prov. 27:6, 10)

Vulnerability

You have to be willing to open up to people. Spiritual nominalism thrives on surface level relationships. It requires about an inch of spiritual soil. Yet, intentional discipleship and relationships need much more than that. You have to be willing to let people go deep to know you for who you really are:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph. 4:1-3)

Preparedness

There are a number of things I could mention—the need to know and wield the Word in one another's lives, for example—but I would emphasize the need to be prepared for messes. These types of

relationships are messy. Just notice the need to forgive and exhort one another from these passages:

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also much forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. (Col. 3:12-15)

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. (Heb. 3:12-14)

You don't plant a healthy garden without hard and messy work, so it is with these relationships. If you want to see people grow spiritually, you have to get to matters of the heart. And the things that can grow there aren't clean to work with. If you want clean and easy relationships, again, just keep relating at a surface level. But some the work that has eternal value is the messy work of spiritually-intentional relationships.

Humility

You have to be humble to recognize your need for discipling relationships. Furthermore, you have to have the humility to confess and ask for help if you do not have them. There is no shame in admitting you have never had or currently have people who can speak lovingly and directly into your life. But it is a matter of pride to say you do not need them. Satan wants you to think you are perfectly fine without them. Do not believe such lies, and humble yourself to an Elder or someone else to ask them to help you foster spiritually-intentional relationships.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would challenge you to consider something we can be tempted to underestimate: *A culture of discipleship testifies to the transforming power of the gospel in ways that are completely counter-cultural.* You can put together a bunch of people that are all alike—same age, life experience, interests, etc.—into a group and see how they really enjoy one another's company. And non-Christians are not going to think much of it. They can say, "Yeah. I have the same thing. It's just not centered on religion, but golf or travel or bird watching or something else I share with my friends." Put together people who are not alike (biblical diversity) with a strong spiritually-intentional commitment to one another marked by love (implication of church membership), then the non-Christians will say, "That's different. I don't have that, and I've never seen it." For example, why is the young single person willing and happy to visit the homebound?

What they are seeing is how the gospel has transformed the lives of a whole group of people and united them in love, encouragement, and accountability. So a culture of discipleship really accomplishes two things that we should desperately desire to see at Mount Vernon: (1) It is part of God's design for seeing Jesus' followers become more like him, and (2) it is a public witness to the gospel in their lives. Will you join us, the Elders, in praying and participating to this end? ■

*This is an expanded article from the Elders' report given at the Church in Conference on May 19, 2013.

One of the most striking sentences in all of Samuel is delivered after God fired Saul from being king of Israel. Saul was shell-shocked to receive the news, and he declares, in a moment of unusual humility, “I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice” (1 Sam. 15:24). Saul is honest. The people of Israel, perhaps even his most trusted advisors, encouraged him to rebel against God. Saul chose to listen to their voice over and against the voice of God, who called him to be king. He trusted the words of men more than the words of God. He feared men more than he feared God. He chose to please the people instead of pleasing God.

PLEASING PEOPLE



PLEASING GOD

Is Saul so unusual? I think not. If we are honest, each and every one of us is tempted to put the opinions of others before the commandments of God. Pride crawls into our bones, demanding the admiration and esteem of others. In fact, this is what it means to live in the fear of man. The proud think that they deserve the respect and attention of others. Of course, the more we understand what we truly deserve (death & judgment) the more we will be thankful for what we have already received in Christ (life & freedom) and the less dependent we will be on the approval of others.

WHY DO WE TRY TO PLEASE OTHER PEOPLE?

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's start with a basic question: why do we try to please other people? Ed Welch, in his helpful book, *When People are Big and God is Small*, lays out three reasons we are all tempted to fear other people. Yes, there is a connection between people-pleasing and people-fearing; we try to please others because, at some level, we fear them. So, why do we fear or please others?

First, because they can expose and humiliate us. This reality is rooted in the fall, the moment shame entered the world. Sadly, shame is part of the sinful fabric of our lives. The presence of sin means that many of us are tortured by the opinions of others. Intellectually, we know this is foolishness; it is God's opinion that matters. But it doesn't feel that way. The eyes of man seem to rip into our hearts, and we are ashamed.

Second, we fear people because they can reject, ridicule, or despise us. Welch put it this way, "When we think of idols, we usually first think of Baal and other material, man-made creations. Next we might think of money. We rarely picture our spouse, our children, or a friend from school. But people are our idol of choice...they do not deserve our worship. They are worshipped because we perceive that they have power to give us something. We think they can bless us."

Third, we fear people because they can hurt, attack, or threaten us. Welch is right to point out that there are times we *should* fear people. This is not sin! This is God's way of preparing us to run from people who would cause us very real harm. But when we talk about the fear of man, in the context of the battle against sin, we are usually talking about the battle against shame and idolatry.

These fears, especially one and two, lead to people pleasing. We tend to put too much stock in how highly people think of us. For many, this can feel like virtual slavery, as if we are actually living for others instead of living for the Lord. But this kind of living is more than foolish; it is futile. We simply can't please others.

WHY CAN'T WE PLEASE OTHER PEOPLE?

Lou Priolo writes in *Pleasing People: How Not to Be an "Approval Junkie"*, that it is impossible to please other people. He offers a bunch of reasons, but I've boiled it down to three.

First, people are different and, therefore, you just *can't* please everyone. Perhaps this seems so obvious, it doesn't need to be stated. And yet, I think we would all be helped to remember that, because we are all wonderfully different, we will not be able to please each other.

Take the simple issue of dessert in the Menikoff home. My family cannot agree on one dessert. Some like fruity desserts (apple pie and banana pudding). Others think dessert requires chocolate. One thinks desserts are too sweet (can you believe it!?). What hope does my dear wife have of trying to please this family? She could, of course, make a different dessert each and every night of the week, but that's not the point. The point is that we are different, we have different tastes, and we simply won't be able to please others all the time. It is important to keep this in mind in the church. Our different preferences with regard to music, décor, etc. will mean someone will always be less than fully satisfied.

Second, people are selfish and, therefore, you just *won't* please everyone. As Priolo puts it, "Every part of man's heart and mind has been negatively affected by sin. This means that everything—from his conscience to his sense of humor, his perceptions to his judgments—is, in varying degrees, marred by the fall."

This is certainly true of non-Christians, right? Unbelievers can do good things. But their motives will never be gospel-centered. They will never be driven by the glory of God. Therefore, we should not expect to be able to please an unbeliever. They will have expectations that we won't be able to meet. This is either because their expectations are unbiblical (they want you to do something the Bible prohibits) or because their expectations are unrealistic (they want you to be a friend to them that only God can be).

We have to realize that Christians can be selfish, too. Galatians 5:19–21 makes it clear that there are sins believers still struggle against. The existence of that fight, the ongoing battle against the flesh, means that believers will be tempted toward selfishness. As a result, even your Christian friend will be hard to please, especially as he or she struggles with idolatry, strife, jealousy, rivalry, and dissension—just a few of the sins Paul mentions in Galatians.

We must engage in the hard work of pleasing God.

Third, people are designed to worship and, therefore, can only be pleased by God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). The wisdom literature makes it clear that man has huge desires that can never be fulfilled. Proverbs 27:20, "Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, and never satisfied are the eyes of man." Sheol and Abaddon represent death. Death is never satisfied. It is always ready for another casualty. The eyes of man are like that, too. Duane Garrett commented on this verse, "Eyes that are not satisfied are eyes that are covetous, and the implied warning is to beware of such greed in self and others." We can't underestimate the inability of humans to be satisfied by other humans. The teacher of Ecclesiastes similarly warned in 1:8, "All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing." There are not enough sights to see, not enough sounds to hear, not enough knowledge to gain, to fill the voracious appetite of man.

This leads us to a foundational truth. Only God can satisfy us. As the Lord said through the prophet Jeremiah, only he can fill the believer: "I will feast the soul of the priests with abundance, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, declares the LORD." Only God's goodness will satisfy his people. Perhaps Jesus had this verse in mind, a truth about the fulfilling role of God's goodness, when he invited his disciples to come to him in Matthew 11:29, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." It is insanity to think we can be pleased by anything or anyone other than God. Only at the fountain of Christ will we be filled. Charles Bridges expressed this truth beautifully:

Here our *desires* are at once increased and *satisfied*. A fountain of infinite fullness is at our door. We are bid welcome to a have of rest, to a bosom of peace and love. And when new-created in the image of God and made capable of communion with him in grace, and of enjoying him in glory, can our *desires be satisfied* with anything less, with anything beside? Is he not now our supreme delight, our satisfying object, never leaving us without complete satisfaction for a single moment?

Try as hard as you will, try as long as you want, other people will never fully please you, only God will. And flip it around. You will never please others. You can't. To try and please another is to attempt to play a role that only God can fill.

But where do we go from here? Now that we've established the impossibility of pleasing man, how can we take the next step and battle the common temptation to please man?

HOW CAN WE STOP TRYING TO PLEASE OTHER PEOPLE?

Once you realize that you can't please others, the battle has just begun. You will still be faced with moments when you are overwhelmed by a desire to do the impossible. Even though we know it is futile to please others, the temptation is so strong we have to be ready to go to war against it. And the enemy (fear of man) is powerful—so powerful, in fact, that we must wage war in two different but complementary ways. On one hand, the only way to break free from that desire to please people is to recognize that, in Christ, you are pleasing to God. On the other hand, the only way to continue to be free from the desire to please people is to recognize that you can please God—and to strive to do so!

In the past, to win a war you needed to battle in the air and on the land. In the war against the fear of man, you must understand that you are pleasing to God (air battle) and you must strive to please God (land battle).

Waging Battle in the Air: Recognizing You Are Pleasing to God

The air and the land battles are both necessary, and it would be foolish to pit them against one another. However, the air campaign is full of "shock and awe." The bombs are powerful and the destruction dramatic. The air campaign is waged by *understanding* that, in Christ, you are justified and, therefore, fully pleasing to God.

Read carefully the following statement on justification from the New Hampshire Confession of Faith:

We believe that the great Gospel blessing which Christ of his fullness bestows on such as believe in Him, is Justification; that Justification consists in the pardon of sin and the promise of eternal life, on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through His own redemption and righteousness, [by virtue of which faith His perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us of God:] that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity.

The person who has been justified or declared righteous by God has the promise of eternal life. And this promise is not the result of his or her works; it is "not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done." Rather, it is the result of the work of Christ. And, as a result, the believer has been brought into "a state of most blessed peace and favor with God." This bit of theology is teaching that because of Christ's work on our behalf, we are pleasing to God. This is the doctrine of justification by faith. It is a doctrine deeply rooted in Scripture.

Romans 5:1, "Therefore, since we have been justified [declared righteous] by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." According to Paul, the state or position of the believer has radically changed—he has been declared righteous. As a result of this declaration he stands in grace and he rejoices in hope.

Galatians 5:1, "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." The first part of this verse focuses on the air campaign—we need to recognize that we have been set

free. All those who have been justified by faith have been set free from sin. It's why I can say you are under no obligation to sin, ever. You have been set free.

Romans 8:1, 3b, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...By sending his own son in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." We are no longer condemned. This is good news, because we deserve God's condemnation. He is holy. We have sinned against him. It would have been right for him to abandon us to an eternity of judgment. And yet God, in his love, sent his Son Jesus Christ to die and be resurrected—for us! Because of what Christ did, we can say with Paul that the righteous requirement of the law has been fulfilled in us, but not because of what we did, but because the Son was sent. We really deserve punishment. Christ really took our punishment. We are now really free from condemnation.

Now do you see why the confession of faith says that justification "brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God?" Understanding this truth is the air war, and it is effective. It is the potency of this air war, the reality that justification by faith means God is pleased with us, that led one author to pen these words:

*Sweet as home to pilgrims weary,
Light to newly opened eyes,
Or full springs in deserts dreary,
It the rest the cross supplies;
All who taste it
Shall to rest immortal rise.*

Waging Battle on the Land: Striving to Please God

It's not enough to engage in air warfare. It's essential, but we must do more than simply remember that we, as believers, have been justified by faith and are now pleasing to God. We must engage in the hard work of pleasing God. This is what I'm calling waging battle on land. The land battle is your effort to strive to please the Lord in the nitty-gritty, daily grind of life. Put another way, it is not enough to recognize you are holy. You must also fight for holiness or you will never escape being a people-fearer, a people-pleaser. Lou Priolo put it well:

The fear of man is to be replaced with fear of God. The desire to please man above all else is to be replaced with the desire to please God above all else. The fear of displeasing (or falling into his disfavor) is to be replaced with the fear of displeasing God (or of falling into His disfavor).

Let's assume that you want to please God (though you should pray that you want to please him more and more), how can you please God? Just remember, as we answer this question, that striving to please God is only the land battle, the air battle must always be waged as well.

First, recognize the need to please God. In Psalm 69:30-31, David wrote, "I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving. This will please the LORD more than on ox or a bull with horns and hoof." David understood the necessity of offering sacrifices to the Lord and the necessity of offering praise to the Lord. But one was better than the other. Both making an offering and praising the Lord are good. And yet, as Derek Kidner remarked, "The point being made...is that personal, explicit praise is more to God's liking and more to man's help than the most expensive sacrifice. David knew he needed to please God, and that meant offering up praise."

In Proverbs 16:7, we read, "When a man's ways please the LORD, he makes even his enemies to live at peace with him." On one hand, we

could say that, as Christians, we are always pleasing to God. Yes, and recognizing this is the air battle. But it is still true that living a life that is pleasing to the Lord (pursuing holiness) is good and good for us. This is the land battle. Pleasing God brings glory to him and, according to Proverbs, is good for us.

And pay special attention to this passage of Paul's from 1 Corinthians 7:32–25, "I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord."

As believers, our goal must not be to please others, but to please God.

Many people read this and think, "My, Paul is getting awfully personal." Paul wants his readers, especially his single readers, to understand the value of staying single. Both the married and the unmarried person is pleasing to the Lord. Paul expects that many, many people will marry, and the married person can honor and please the Lord (which is good for those of us who are married to know). Still, the point remains that the unmarried person is uniquely well-situated to live a life pleasing to God. Sure, most people will, by necessity, choose marriage. However, the single person should be aware that there is a way to especially please the Lord, and it is the way of singleness—words we don't often hear! Marriage and singleness are both pleasing to God, but the single person has an advantage to bring special delight to our great God.

Romans 8:7–8, "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." Obviously, an unbeliever cannot wage war either by air or on land. The unbeliever is *not* pleasing to God and *cannot* please God. The believer, however, is always pleasing to God (the doctrine of justification by faith teaches this). There are, nonetheless, times when the believer succumbs to temptation (Gal. 5:16; Jam. 1:14–15). In these moments, the believer is technically not "in" the flesh but is still living a worldly life that is not pleasing to God.

Therefore, the Christian should understand that, though he is a believer, he must still strive to please the Lord. Though, on one hand, he is pleasing, he must still strive to please. This is not a contradiction. It is God's design for the Christian life.

Second, repent of sinful thoughts, attitudes and actions that are not pleasing to God, and make it your aim to please him. The Christian is always able to confess sin. Consider the Lord's Prayer. Jesus instructs his disciples to pray in Matthew 5:12, "forgive us our debts." Jesus established this as a pattern of prayer for the church. This means that the believer is always to specify sins that need to be turned from. This accords with 1 John 1:8, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." There is most certainly sin in your life that you need to repent of.

People-pleasing is a sin that we need to repent of. As believers, our goal must not be to please others, but to please God. Of course, we will do many things that are pleasing to other people. Paul told us to do good to all men (Gal. 6:10). But our attempts to simply love our neighbor become people-pleasing when their approval becomes our goal. This

is idolatry. But when the approval of God is our goal, we are engaged in worship.

Notice what Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, "Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil" (2 Cor. 5:8–10). Paul put it clearly. We must "make it our aim to please him." Though, by God's grace, we are pleasing to the Lord (and recognizing this is the air battle) we must nonetheless make it our aim to please him (and doing this is the land battle).

Third, pursue a daily walk with the Lord. We are to live in a way that pleases God. Paul urges the churches in Colossae and Thessalonica to walk like this. Colossians 1:9–10, "And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." And in 1 Thessalonians 4:1–3, "Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more."

In each passage, Paul exhorts believers to walk in such a way that the Lord is pleased with us. How do you fight the temptation to please others? By putting all of your energy into pleasing the Lord. Live to please him. And here is the amazing news: you can please the Lord. It is impossible to please another person, but it is possible for the Christian to please God.

John Stott expounded upon the importance of striving to please God:

First, it is a radical concept, for it strikes at the roots of our discipleship and challenges the reality of our profession. How can we clam to know and to love God if we do not seek to please him? Disobedience is ruled out. Secondly, it is a flexible principle. It will rescue us from the rigidities of a Christian Pharisaism which tries to reduce morality to a list of do's and don'ts.... Thirdly, this principle is progressive. If our goal is to be perfectly pleasing to God, we shall never be able to claim that we have arrived. Instead, we are summoned to please him more and more.

And, I would humbly add to Stott's comments, that the concept of pleasing God is exclusive. It crowds out man-pleasing. We will surely do please others by virtue of obeying God's commands, but our pleasing of neighbor is only the fruit of our desire and our efforts to please God. His pleasure is the goal of our lives. And by telling us to please him, God is not commanding what we cannot deliver. By the power of the Holy Spirit in us, we can please him. As Paul confessed, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). And "all things" includes living a life that is pleasing to the Lord.

CONCLUSION

If you want to stop people-fearing and people-pleasing, you have to go to war. War is waged in two ways: air and land. The air war is waged by *recognizing* you have been justified by faith, each and every day. The land war is waged by *walking* with the Lord, each and every day.

How is the gospel of Jesus Christ central to both battles? First, the air war is the heart of the gospel. We worship a Savior who feared man not a wit, but feared God so much he obeyed to the point of death. That death secured life and freedom for us. Second, the land war is the fruit of the gospel, the gospel working itself out in our lives. This is where head knowledge becomes hard work. This is where what is true in the heavenly realms is tasted in the here and now. ■

~ Aaron Menikoff

June 2013

1 9:00 am VBS Work Day									
2 1:00 pm VBS Work Day 6:00 pm Lord's Supper	3 Vacation Bible School (9:30 am – 12:20 pm daily)	4	5 6:15 pm VBS Family Night	6	7	8			
9 4:00 pm Covenant Group Leaders' Meeting	10	11	12 9:30 am Women's Always True Bible Study Begins	13	14	15 10:00 am Father/Son Canoe Trip			
16 Father's Day	17	18	19	20	21	22			
23 D3 Conference 4:30 pm Scripture Readers' Workshop	24	25	26	27	28	29			
30									

EVENTS

CHURCHWIDE

June 2 6:00 pm *Lord's Supper*

We encourage members to examine their hearts and relationship with one another in preparation for this celebration of Christ's death and resurrection.

June 23 4:30 pm *Scripture Readers' Workshop*

Members interested in participating in the ministry of the public reading of Scripture in our morning worship services should plan to attend a workshop in which we will pursue ways to more effectively communicate the power and message of God's Word.

ADULT

June 9 4:00 pm *Covenant Group Leaders' Meeting*

All covenant group leaders are invited to a time of prayer and discussion about the Covenant Group ministry.

CHILDREN

June 1 9:00 am *VBS Work Day*

June 2 1:00 pm *VBS Work Day*

In preparation for VBS, we will have several work days.

June 3–6 9:30 am *Vacation Bible School*

This year at VBS, we will follow Paul and the underground church as they help us understand how great a salvation God has provided in Christ.

June 5 6:15 pm *VBS Family Night*

The children will share many of the things they have learned during VBS.

WOMEN

June 12 9:30 am *Women's Always True Bible Study Begins*

(See ad on page 1.)

STUDENTS

June 15 10:00 am *Father/Son Canoe Trip*

The students will have a day for fathers and sons to go canoeing at Azalea Park in Roswell.

June 23–27 *D3 Conference*

Our MVBC students will be heading to Louisville for the D3 conference at Southern Seminary. We will be hearing talks on how to cultivate a Christian worldview, missions, and leadership.

BIRTHDAYS

1 Ann Barnes
Heidi Neal
Wanda Patterson
4 Pat Knowles
Judy Kuhlman
7 Robert Versele
9 Claudia Payne
10 Stan Thompson
11 Chris Spruill
13 Rebecca Cox
14 David Derrer
15 Gayle Hynds
16 Helen Carter
Kris McCleskey
17 Corb Hankey
Ben Hudson
Julia Johnston
18 Kris McNeese
Jeffrey Timmons
Doug Young

20 Carolyn Chatham
21 Carrie Rochester
22 Michelle Hoover
Holly Reeves
Rosie Reeves
23 Paula Costello
Ethan Meadows
24 Cameron Davis
Bill Frantz
Matthew Reid
27 Preston Heard
Joy Hudson
28 Kelly Dudley
Barbara Hodge
Kylie Jenkins
30 Joel Andrews
Justin Weltscheff



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**



Lord's Supper Fellowship Meal

Members, save the date for Sunday, July 7, for our next Lord's Supper fellowship meal. Immediately after the evening service, we will gather for a meal and fellowship in the fellowship hall. Sign-up sheets are forthcoming. Everyone is welcome to attend.

All four sessions will be offered Sunday, July 7, during the Sunday School hour (session 1) and from 12:00–2:30 pm (sessions 2–3). 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 info@mvbchurch.org.



850 Mount Vernon Highway NW
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