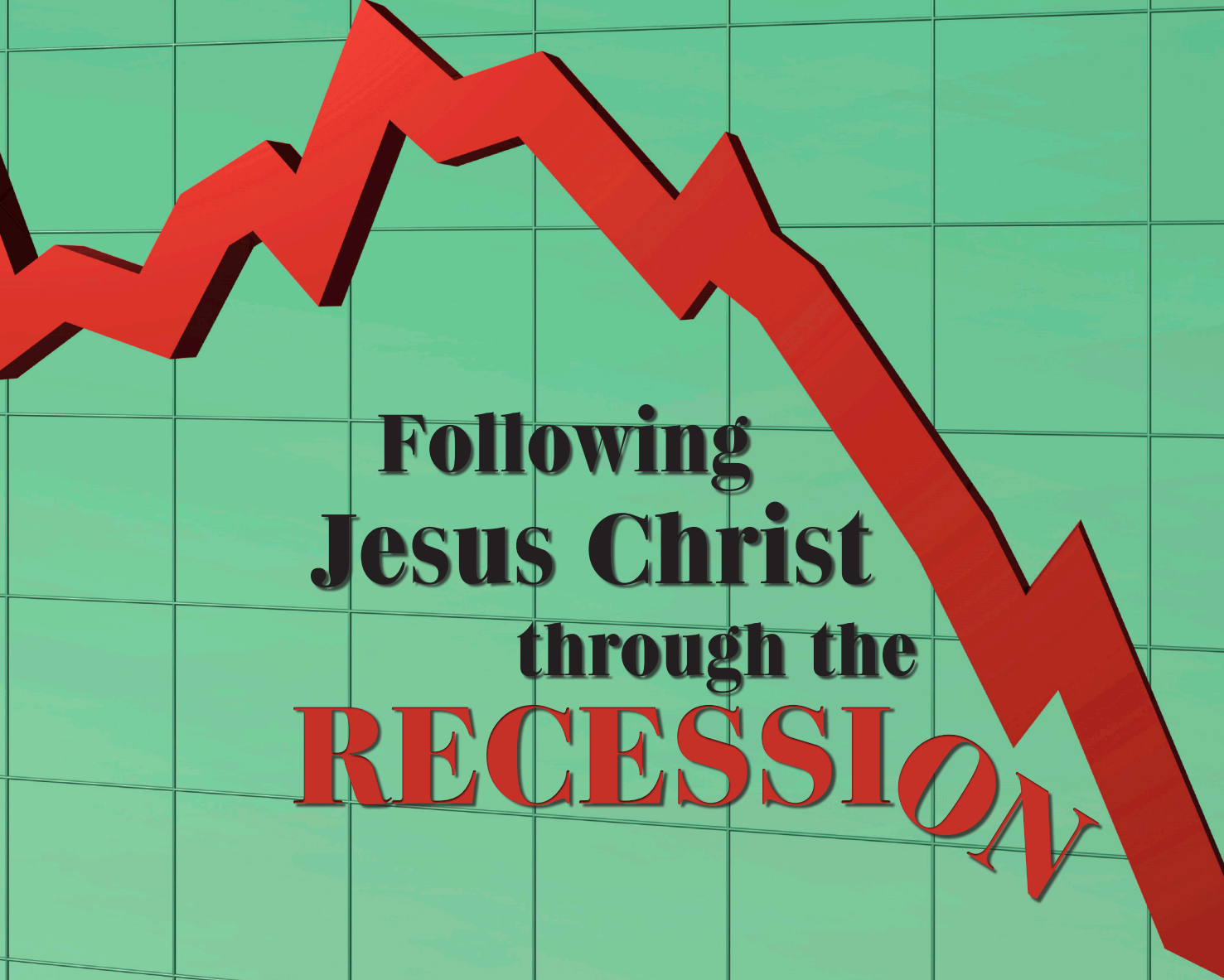


# PERSPECTIVE

THE MONTHLY JOURNAL OF MOUNT VERNON BAPTIST CHURCH



Following  
Jesus Christ  
through the  
**RECESSION**



# Welcome to Mount Vernon!

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## SERMON SCHEDULE

May 3 ..... *Listen to the Savior*  
Hebrews 1:1-4

May 10 ..... *What Am I Supposed to Do Now?*  
Ephesians 5:1-21  
Guest Preacher: Jim Sproull

May 17 ..... *Pay Attention to the Savior*  
Hebrews 1:5-2:18

May 24 ..... *Find Rest in the Savior*  
Hebrews 3:1-4:13

May 31 ..... *Hold Firmly to the Faith*  
Hebrews 4:14-5:10



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## New Members



JEFF & KARNA CASE  
Sandy Springs



ERIC & DANIELLE RASMUSSEN  
Atlanta



BILL FRANKLIN  
Lawrenceville



AMANDA GRAVITT  
Smyrna



SUNDAY, MAY 17  
9:15-10:15 AM IN THE MOUNT VERNON ROOM

JOIN US FOR A FIRST LOOK AT MOUNT VERNON!  
COME AND LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR CHURCH AS YOU  
MAKE YOUR MEMBERSHIP DECISION.



**We have placed new literature around the church so that you can be informed about what is going on at Mount Vernon through the course of the summer.**

**Ministry Cards for the children's, youth, and recreation ministries are available which outline the schedule—both regular weekly events and special events which you may want to attend.**

**Additionally, we now have an Adult Shepherd Group brochure which outlines all of our Adult Sunday morning Bible studies and what each one will be studying through the summer.**

**Finally, the new Summer Church Card is available, detailing the sermons through August as well as giving a brief overview of who we are as church.**

**Please feel free to take these cards and use them to remember events or give them to potential guests.**



# Membership Directory



Membership directories: Why do we have them? How should we use them? The first answer that immediately and often comes to mind is that they are a source of contact information. They are like a White Pages just for MVBC. Well, they are that, but I would suggest they are so much more than simply contact source. They are a tool for discipleship and community life.

Over the past few months, the staff and deacons have begun work to accurately identify the members of MVBC and their whereabouts. This wasn't simply a matter of numbers for bookkeeping. It was something more important. We wanted to know whom we were responsible to shepherd and care for under God. The leadership knows that one day we will be accountable before God for the flock He has given us, so we wanted to know the sheep.

On Sunday, May 3, new membership directories will be available at Connections Corner. I want to offer a couple of ways you can use your directories as a means of assistance to MVBC's leadership and to help foster discipleship and community life.

First and most importantly, pray through the directory. At each staff and Leadership Team meeting, those involved pray through a page of the directory before we look at any items on the agenda. Each person or family is briefly prayed for individually. I would encourage you to do the same. Make it a part of your quiet time. Use it in your family devotions. Pray for someone different before every meal. Make a point to pray for family members of members listed until you've prayed through all of them in the directory. Pray for all the homebound members and leaders each month.

There are a lot of creative ways you can pray through the directory.

When doing this, I often realize how many people I don't yet know and need to meet. Maybe the same will be true for you. Maybe you'll be reminded of someone needing encouragement, and now you want to contact them. Maybe you'll see a name of one who hasn't been attending for a while, so now you are challenged to find out how he or she is doing or if that person has joined a church.

Second, help the leadership keep track of the whereabouts of members. Nearly half the members listed in this first directory are identified as not attending. We know the whereabouts of many. Nonetheless, we have no information on a significant number of them. We need your help in getting that information. It is our desire to print a directory after each quarterly Church in Conference when we have taken in new members and recognized those outgoing. So we want our directories, as best as possible, to reflect the number of members regularly present. The church is a visible community, and we desire to show that reality in our directories.

And, yes, we will be working on a pictorial directory in the month's ahead. ☺

~ Brad Thayer



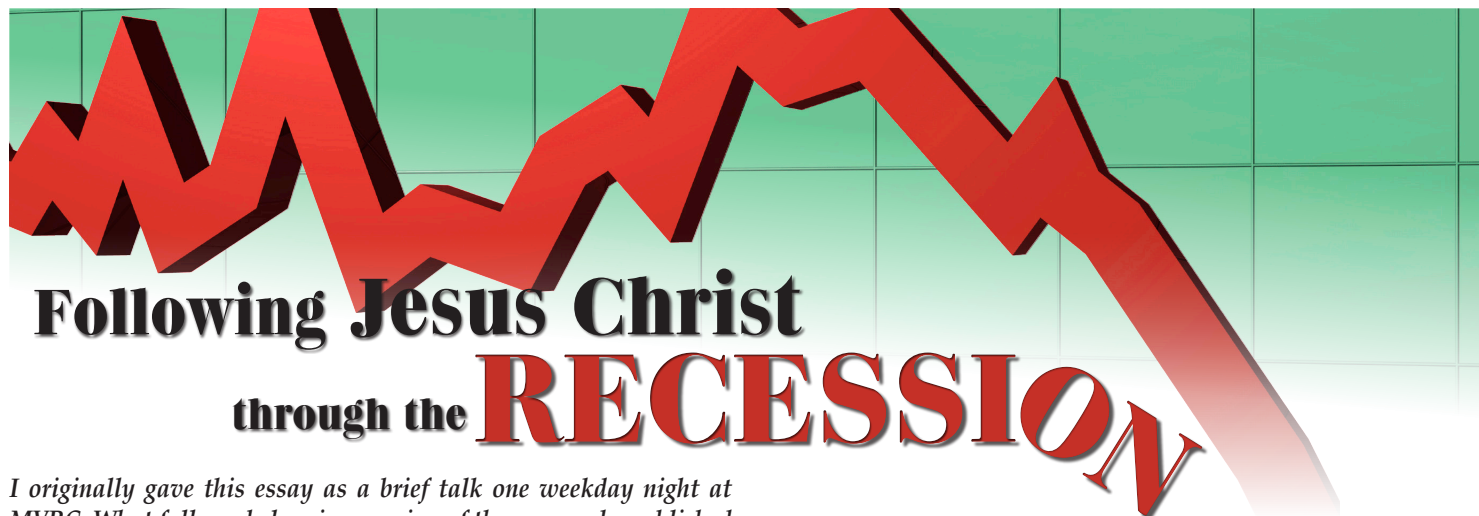
## VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Vacation Bible School will be June 1-5 from 9:30 am - 12:00 pm. Children ages 3 years old to 5<sup>th</sup> grade are invited to join us as we meet Paul and the underground church each day when we journey to Rome! It's free and fun with games, music, snacks, drama, and even crafts. You can now register online by going to [www.mvbchurch.org](http://www.mvbchurch.org) and clicking on the VBS logo.

**SEE YOU IN ROME!**







# Following Jesus Christ through the RECESSION

*I originally gave this essay as a brief talk one weekday night at MVBC. What follows below is a version of those remarks published at Christianity.com. After the publication, some questions came in from readers.*

*One reader asked about the focus on biblical manhood. That is a great question since unemployment does not discriminate between men and women. Nonetheless, Christian men—especially men who are married and with kids—bear a unique responsibility to provide for their families. Therefore, it seemed wise to give special attention to biblical manhood and how it is affected by unemployment. Second, one reader asked, “What about God? This essay is all about what we should do, but what is God going to do?” Another great question. God calls us to work, to act, to serve, and to follow. But, through it all, we trust that what Paul wrote is still true, “it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Phil. 2:13).*

*However the downturn in the economy has affected you, I pray that we would all follow Christ through the recession. Economies falter and crash, but Christ endures. It is now our mission to endure through him.*

The church I serve, like a lot of other churches, has been affected by the recession. Several individuals have lost their jobs and are working hard to follow Christ in a difficult season of life. We recently came together for an evening of encouragement and counsel. I suggested ten ways the unemployed can address their trial with a biblical worldview:

**First, confess anxiety.** To be anxious is to be nervous or worried about the future. Being anxious can consume our lives. I remember, toward the end of my schooling in seminary, sitting and listening to a sermon but not really listening. My mind was overcome with questions about the future: “Where I would be a year from now, what I would be doing, and how would God provide for my family?” We know from Scripture that “an anxious heart weighs a man down” (Prov. 12:25). We know that David prayed, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts” (Psalm 139:23). We should not be weighed down by anxiety. We should repent of it with a robust conviction that God will not fail us. Where do we start? Confess anxiety.

**Second, expect difficulty.** Work is hard. Looking for work is hard. Life is hard. One of the great things about being a Christian is we know why this is the case. Judgment came when sin entered the world through Adam’s sin. God decreed then and there that work would be hard: “Cursed is the ground because of you; through

painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life” (Gen. 3:17). We have no reason to think that keeping a job will be easy and we have every reason to believe that finding a job will be hard. At least we understand why. We live in a fallen world where crops don’t grow without hard labor and where jobs aren’t kept or found without toil. Expect difficulty.

**Third, embrace responsibility.** Paul instructed Timothy, “If anyone does not provide for his relatives and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim. 5:8). I remember in the 80s when the economy tanked. My stepdad was a carpet-layer at the time. In the face of no jobs at home, he traveled to Arizona to work. He took seriously his responsibility to make sure we had food on the table. I respect that. How much more should Christian men—those who have experienced the work of Jesus Christ on their behalf—strive to provide, materially, for their families? Embrace responsibility.

**Fourth, embrace biblical manhood.** Men need to feel the full force of Paul’s instruction to Timothy. Pastor John Piper minced no words when he wrote, “where there is no bread on the table it is the man who should feel the main pressure to do something to get it there.” There may very well be seasons where that is not happening. Following Christ certainly means using every godly means available to provide for one’s family. However, being a godly man does not merely mean providing *physically* for one’s family.

A godly husband and father provides *spiritually* for his family. Paul explained to the church in Ephesus, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish” (Eph. 5:25-27).

If you are unemployed right now you may not be able to put money in the bank account. You should be actively looking for work. As you look, you are still your family’s spiritual leader. You can lead your family to pursue Christ passionately, in thick and thin, in employment and unemployment. You can provide an amazing example of faith for your wife and kids. Consider these words from James Dobson:

A Christian man is obligated to lead his family to the best of his ability...If his family has purchased too many items on credit, then the financial crunch is ultimately his fault. If the family never reads the Bible or seldom goes to church on Sunday, God holds the man to blame. If the children are

disrespectful and disobedient, the primary responsibility lies with the father...not his wife...In my view, America’s greatest need is for husbands to begin guiding their families, rather than pouring every physical and emotional resource into the mere acquisition of money.

The church needs men who understand their role to provide physically and spiritually for their families. Embrace biblical manhood.

**Fifth, do not love the world.** Jim Wood served as the pastor of Mount Vernon Baptist Church, where I serve now, between 1985 and 1991. He left in the church’s hay day to start a home and school for children in Tennessee; Wears Valley Ranch. He left a position of security for the challenge of starting a brand new ministry. The fact of the matter is, we can’t do anything that is really, really great if we love the world. When we refuse to love the world we are better able to trust that God will provide.

What is the alternative? Let’s say you get that job and eventually move into middle management. Eventually you do so well you are promoted to regional manager. Maybe you have stock options and enough money for a down payment on a second home. Then what? Remember what John wrote:

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever (1 John 2:15-17).

It is easier to weather the storms of life when the object of our affections is Christ. Tying ourselves to “the world and its desires” is a recipe for spiritual disaster.

**Sixth, have an eternal perspective.** This, of course, is related to the preceding point. An eternal perspective is fueled by the commitment not to love the world. Jesus was so clear: “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?” (Mark 8:36). If you happen to be reading this and identify yourself as a non-Christian, consider the reality that stuff does not last. One day we will all stand before a holy God, the God who made us, and we will be forced to account for our lives. God is not going to ask about the size of our 401(k) or the efficiency of our company. The eternal questions are much more significant: “Did I trust in Christ, the crucified and resurrected savior? Did I love him more than anything else?” Believe the Gospel. Have an eternal perspective.

**Seventh, do not worry.** This is a herculean request. Jesus addressed this very topic when he spoke to his disciples: “Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or stow away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?” (Matt. 6:26). Christians need to take this promise seriously. The issue at hand is “needs.” God has promised to provide for our needs. How does He do that? Ordinarily this is

through a local church. Local churches met the needs of the poor in the Jerusalem church (2 Cor. 8). We should not worry because we know God will provide what we need. We should put ourselves in a position to benefit from God’s generosity by committing ourselves to a local body of Christ.

**Eighth, embrace spiritual disciplines.** God has given you time. Use that time to pursue God with zeal. The psalmist prayed, “You are my portion, O LORD; I have promised to obey your words. I have sought your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise” (Psalm 119:57-58). This should be the attitude of every believer. We should be seeking God. He has given us a day, the Lord’s Day. We should use it well. We will be tempted to overindulge in distractions afforded by the world—sports, movies, and television. Sometimes we need a distraction. We always, however, need to seek the face of God. This takes time. It takes discipline. A job loss is a tremendous opportunity to commit oneself to spiritual growth. Read the Word. Pray the Word. Listen to the Word preached. Embrace spiritual disciplines.

**Ninth, rejoice.** We should never underestimate the value of tough times. Every trial, unemployment included, is an opportunity for the grace of God to be obvious in our lives. As James wrote, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4). This kind of joy is not a shallow happiness accompanied by a fake grin. It is, instead, a committed resolve to praise God through hardship. It is the quiet confidence that God reigns in any and every difficulty. Rejoice.

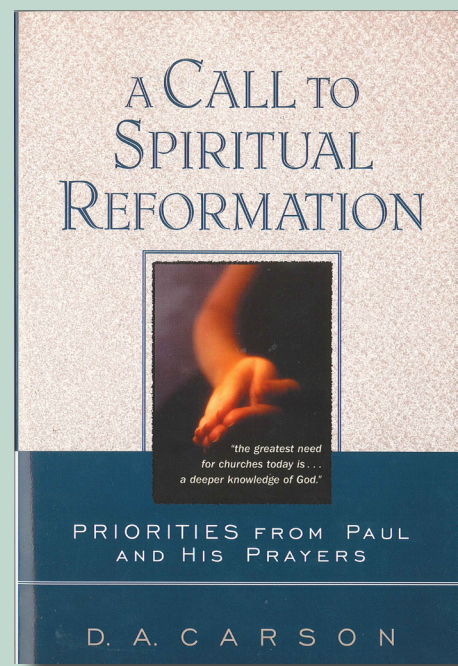
**Tenth, prove that God is powerful.** Trials exist not only so that we will be made holy but so that God will be glorified. We are weak, fragile beings. We have every reason to crack under the disappointment of a lost job. God, however, intends for our perseverance in the midst of trials to provide evidence that He is powerful. Paul taught the church in Corinth that the Gospel of God is a treasure at work in our lives to prove that God is great:

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed (2 Cor. 4:7-9).

Jars of clay are crushable. We are easily broken. God is strong, unbreakable. When we endure as Christians in the face of trials we show that God sustains His children. If you are unemployed, please do not waste this opportunity to prove “this all-surpassing power is from God.” In God’s wisdom you have been given the privilege of showing the world that God is faithful. As you hold on to the Gospel in the midst of your job loss, prove that God is powerful. ☩

~ Aaron Menikoff





## A CALL TO SPIRITUAL REFORMATION

by D. A. Carson\*  
Reviewed by Wayne Elliott

DO YOU FIND IT difficult to pray? Sometimes?

Most of the time? Many of us experience some difficulty in prayer. And, to be honest, sometimes we just fail to pray. In his book *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and His Prayers*, D. A. Carson proposes that sheer prayerlessness characterizes much of the Western church. To the extent that most of us pray with any frequency, the majority of our prayers are in pursuit of our own happiness and fulfillment.

Our excuses not to pray may range from “I’m too busy,” to “I feel too spiritually dry to pray,” to “I feel no need to pray,” to “I am too bitter to pray,” to “I am too ashamed to pray,” to “I am content with mediocrity” (ouch!). If we do pray, do our prayer lives reflect an assumption that God is the One who simply meets our needs and fulfills our aspirations? Carson laments that we are not captured by God’s holiness and love and that we tend to think that Christianity is something to add to our already busy lives rather than what controls, constrains and shapes our vision and goals for life.

Carson argues that one of the fundamental steps in knowing God is spiritual, persistent, biblically minded prayer. He quotes Robert Murray M’Cheyne from a century and a half ago saying, “What a man is alone on his knees before God, that he is, and no more” (16). Among Carson’s first admonitions to the reader is a simple yet pro-

found one: “We will not grow in prayer unless we plan to pray” (18). Acknowledging a problem in praying, which most of us struggle with—mental drift—Carson proposes practical solutions, including the realistic encouragement to “pray until you pray.” He continued, “Wherever we stand in the spectrum of Christian maturation, we could do better than we do, and many of us could do much better. One of the most important steps we can take is to recognize where we are. We quietly confess that we are dangerously dry” (21).

In this encouraging yet challenging book, Carson leads the reader through a study of the prayers of the Apostle Paul as recorded in the New Testament, devoting one chapter to each of the eight prayers by Paul for the churches who were in his care. One of the remarkable things about Paul’s recorded prayers is that most are devoted to praying for others. Presumably he prayed for himself and for the practical needs of his ministry. Yet, his prayers recorded in Scripture reflect him interceding for others, exhorting local churches, and glorifying God. Praying for others, Carson points out, demands that we examine our own hearts for, if we are serious about reforming our prayer lives, we must begin with our own hearts.

In examining Paul’s prayer from 1 Thessalonians 3, we realize that “there is no prayer we can pray for others more fundamental than this: that God might strengthen their hearts so that they will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father on the last day.” What a powerful prayer to pray over those whom God has placed on our hearts, including our church family at Mount Vernon!



We publish a weekly e-newsletter called *The Courier*. It includes the church calendar, Sunday evening prayer requests, volunteer and service opportunities, miscellaneous announcements, and classifieds.

If you are interested in subscribing to *The Courier*, please email [news@mvbchurch.org](mailto:news@mvbchurch.org) or fill out “The Edge” on the Sunday morning bulletins. You can also download a copy of *The Courier* from our website ([www.mvbchurch.org](http://www.mvbchurch.org)). Please contact [news@mvbchurch.org](mailto:news@mvbchurch.org) if you are interested in placing an ad in *The Courier*.

Reflecting on the mystery and nature of God in our prayers is important because the more we know of the God to whom we pray, the more effective our prayers will be. Carson writes, “The one thing we most urgently need in Western Christendom is a deeper knowledge of God. We need to know God better.” So how do we pray to this sovereign, omnipotent, yet intimate God of personal relationship? Carson states, “It is worth praying to a sovereign God because he is free and can take action as he will; it is worth praying to a personal God because he hears, responds, and acts on behalf of his people, not according to the blind rigidities of inexorable fate.”

“God is absolutely sovereign; yet His sovereignty does not diminish human responsibility and accountability” (148). Carson examines with considerable skill and wisdom the reality of a sovereign God. He is “so sovereign that nothing that takes place in the universe can escape the outermost boundary of his control; yet the Bible insists God is good, unreservedly good, the very standard of goodness” (158).

With God’s sovereignty in mind, what are we to make of biblical passages that indicate God “re-

lented” in response to prayer (162-166)? Carson writes, “The really wonderful truth is that human beings...can participate in bringing about God’s purposes through God’s own appointed means. In that limited sense, prayer certainly changes things” (164). The prayer of God’s chosen people is, remarkably, one of God’s appointed means to accomplish His purposes. That realization most certainly should give us incentive to pray biblically!

Wherever we may be in our spiritual maturation, we would do well to read and accept the challenges offered in *A Call to Spiritual Reformation*. At 230 pages, this highly recommended book is divided into twelve chapters and is designed for either individual study or small group study, with questions provided at the end of each chapter. Could it be that the Lord is challenging the saints at Mount Vernon to step up our prayer to a higher level, and to participate thereby in our Lord’s sovereign purposes? #s

\*D. A. Carson is research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL.





- 1. Through the iTunes store.**  
When in the iTunes store browser, click in the search field in the top right and type in “Mount Vernon Baptist Church” and then press enter. Now click on the link next to the MV logo, and then click the “Subscribe” button.
- 2. Through the Advanced menu.**  
Open iTunes and click on the “Advanced” menu, and click on “Subscribe to Podcast...” In the field, type in “[http://www.mvbcchurch.org/mvbc\\_rss.xml](http://www.mvbcchurch.org/mvbc_rss.xml)” and hit enter. The download should begin automatically.

→ **FIRST LOOK**  
**MAY 17 - 9:15 AM**

Join us for a First Look at Mount Vernon in the Mount Vernon Room! Come and learn more about our church as you make your membership decision. No need to RSVP—just come!



850 MOUNT VERNON HIGHWAY NW  
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