

PERSPECTIVE

THE MONTHLY JOURNAL OF MOUNT VERNON BAPTIST CHURCH

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2 TIMOTHY 2:3

me in the presence of many witnesses.² entrust to faithful men³ who will be able to teach others also.⁴ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.⁵ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.⁶ An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.⁷ It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.⁸ Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

⁹Remember Jesus Christ,¹⁰ risen from the dead, the offspring of David,¹¹ as preached in my gospel,¹² for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the eternal glory that is in Christ Jesus with the salvation that is the saying is trustworthy, for:

- ¹ If we have died with him, we will also live with him;
- ¹² If we endure, we will also reign with him;
- ¹³ If we deny him, he also will deny us;
- ¹⁴ If we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.

A Worker Approved by God

¹⁴Remind them of these things, and charge them before God¹⁵ not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers.¹⁶ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved; a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.¹⁷ But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into error and more godlessness,¹⁸ and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them will be Hymeneus and Philetus,¹⁹ who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

¹ Some manuscripts the Lord. ² That is, one approved after being tested. ³ Greek from these things. ⁴ Greek, beforehand.

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²⁰Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable.

²¹Therefore, "if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable," he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

²²So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.²³ Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.

²⁴And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

Godliness in the Last Days

³But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty.² For people will be "lovers of self," lovers of money,³ proud, arrogant, abusive,⁴ disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,⁵ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good,⁶ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,⁷ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

⁸For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, and always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.⁹ Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also posed the truth, "men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding faith." But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all,¹⁰ as was that of those two men.

⁷ 1 Tim. 24: 8-10; 1 Cor. 13: 11-12; 1 Tim. 6: 5-6; 1 Tim. 6: 10-11; 1 Tim. 6: 12-13.

All Scripture Is Breathed Out by God

¹⁰You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness,¹¹ my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra— which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me.¹² Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,¹³ while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

Preach the Word

⁴I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ⁵preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.⁶ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,⁷ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.⁸ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.⁹ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.¹⁰ I have fought

¹⁰ The Greek for whom is get. ¹¹ The Greek for whom is get. ¹² The Greek for whom is get. ¹³ The Greek for whom is get. ¹⁴ The Greek for whom is get. ¹⁵ The Greek for whom is get. ¹⁶ The Greek for whom is get. ¹⁷ The Greek for whom is get.

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2 TIMOTHY 4:22

the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.² Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Personal Instructions

⁹Do your best to come to me soon.¹⁰ For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.¹¹ Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.¹² Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.¹³ When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments.¹⁴ Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.¹⁵ Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message.¹⁶ At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them!¹⁷ But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Final Greetings

¹⁹Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.²⁰ Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus.²¹ Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers.²² The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

²⁰ Acts 20: 21-22; 21: 1-2; 22: 1-2; 23: 1-2; 24: 1-2; 25: 1-2; 26: 1-2; 27: 1-2; 28: 1-2; 29: 1-2; 30: 1-2; 31: 1-2; 32: 1-2; 33: 1-2; 34: 1-2; 35: 1-2; 36: 1-2; 37: 1-2; 38: 1-2; 39: 1-2; 40: 1-2; 41: 1-2; 42: 1-2; 43: 1-2; 44: 1-2; 45: 1-2; 46: 1-2; 47: 1-2; 48: 1-2; 49: 1-2; 50: 1-2; 51: 1-2; 52: 1-2; 53: 1-2; 54: 1-2; 55: 1-2; 56: 1-2; 57: 1-2; 58: 1-2; 59: 1-2; 60: 1-2; 61: 1-2; 62: 1-2; 63: 1-2; 64: 1-2; 65: 1-2; 66: 1-2; 67: 1-2; 68: 1-2; 69: 1-2; 70: 1-2; 71: 1-2; 72: 1-2; 73: 1-2; 74: 1-2; 75: 1-2; 76: 1-2; 77: 1-2; 78: 1-2; 79: 1-2; 80: 1-2; 81: 1-2; 82: 1-2; 83: 1-2; 84: 1-2; 85: 1-2; 86: 1-2; 87: 1-2; 88: 1-2; 89: 1-2; 90: 1-2; 91: 1-2; 92: 1-2; 93: 1-2; 94: 1-2; 95: 1-2; 96: 1-2; 97: 1-2; 98: 1-2; 99: 1-2; 100: 1-2.

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN HE'S PREACHING

A USER'S GUIDE TO THE SERMON

What Is Expository Preaching?



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STAFF > SERMON SCHEDULE

- May 6** **Who Is This...?**
Luke 7:36-50
Guest Preacher: Dr. Tony Higgins
- May 13** **"I Once Was Lost"**
Judges 17:1-21:25
- May 20** **"The Lord Has Promised Good to Me"**
Judges 1:1-2:15
- May 27** **"Through Many Dangers, Toils, and Snares"**
Judges 2:16-16:31

> FIGHTER VERSE

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Romans 1:16

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A book review on biblical manhood and womanhood.
by Patrick Hearn

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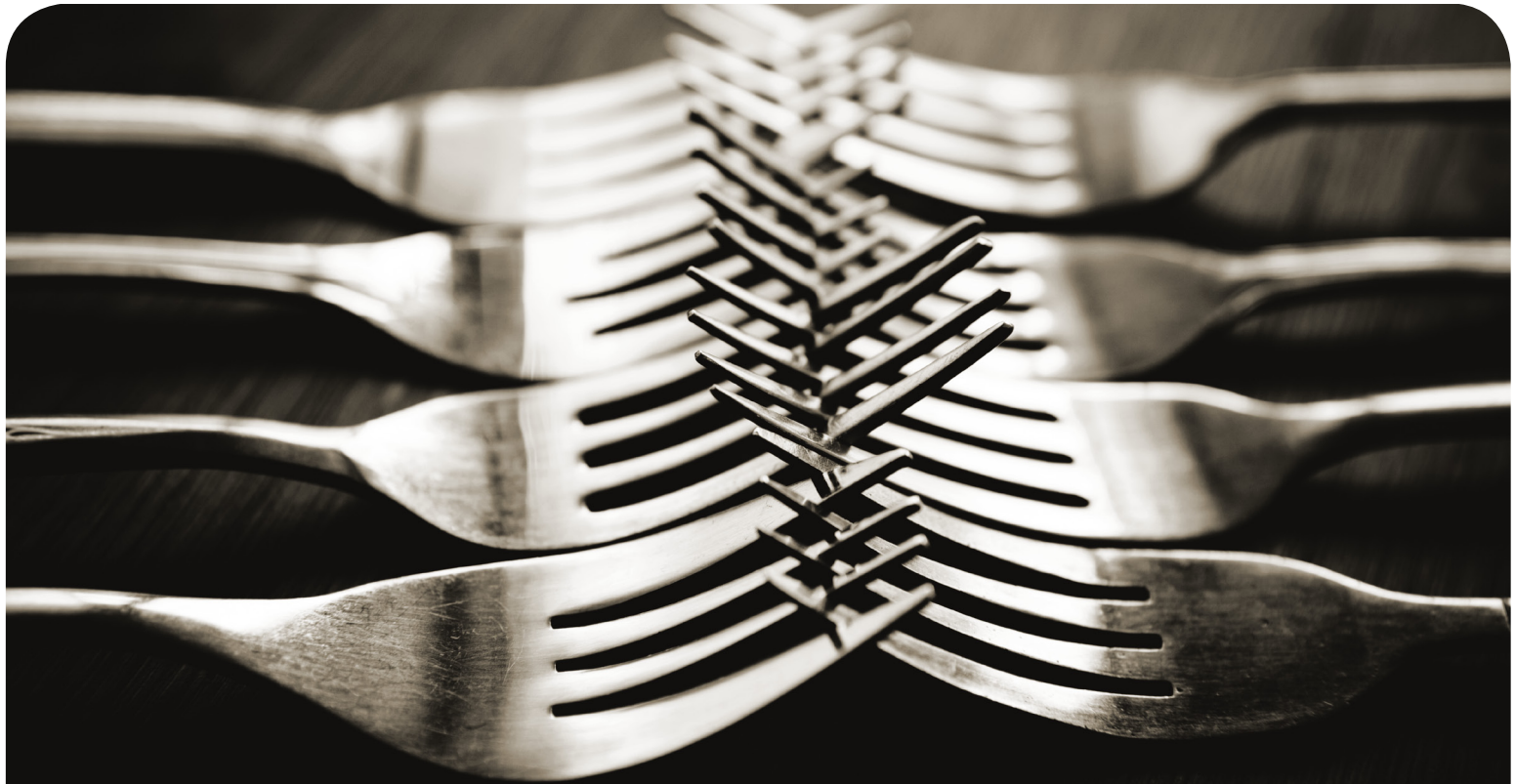
What to Expect When He's Preaching: **What Is Expositional Preaching?**

An article on the importance of expositional preaching from the Word.
by Aaron Menikoff

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Lord's Supper Fellowship Meal

Sunday, May 6, after the evening service. See Connections Corner for details.

AMAZING GRACE

five studies in the book of judges

Pastor Aaron will begin a five-part sermon series on the book of Judges.

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

Sermons are also available on CD for \$5 per copy



What's the Difference?

By John Piper

Reviewed by Patrick Hearn



OUR CULTURE IS CURRENTLY UNDERGOING anWhat does it mean to be a man or to be a woman? What are the expectations and responsibilities of being a man or woman? What exactly is entailed in that simple and timeless pronouncement made at the birth of a child—"It's a boy!" It's a girl!"? We live in a time and culture when the answers to these basic questions fundamental to being human are re-evaluated and even redefined. As Christians, we can get lost in the fog of gender confusion in our culture. So where do we turn? The culture? Blindly back to tradition? Or will we turn to the source of all truth—God and His word? John Piper is very helpful in navigating us through the basic question of our gender identity and roles in his book *What's the Difference? Manhood and Womanhood Defined According to the Bible*.

Instead of asking, "What's the difference?", the tendency today is to minimize the uniqueness between men and women. Children are growing up in a world of confusion, not knowing what it means to be a man or woman. Instead of this leading to a newfound freedom, it leads to more sexual sin, divorces, and social awkwardness.

Piper's purpose is to define manhood and womanhood as God wills them to be according to the Bible. Men and women are created equal in the image of God. They both are of equal worth, value, importance, dignity, and more. They both resemble something

of what God is like and are His royal representatives. Yet, God also created men and women with different and complementary roles. They have been given different responsibilities that help complete one another. These differences do not undermine a man or woman's worth and value. Rather, they bring a man and woman in proper relationship to one another under their Creator God as He intended, a relationship he observed as a child at home. Here's how Piper defines it: "At the heart of mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for and protect women in ways appropriate to a man's differing relationships. At the heart of mature femininity is a freeing disposition to affirm, receive and nurture strength and leadership from worthy men in ways appropriate to a woman's differing relationships."

This book is an excerpt from a larger book co-edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem—*Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. This short little book serves as an overview to a much more detailed and rigorous study. Which means you get the fruit of his work without having to labor through all the detailed interpretations of biblical texts.

I appreciate the way Piper explains the differences of manhood and womanhood by explaining the definition phrase by phrase. (This takes up the majority of the book.) I found this extremely helpful because there was no confusion about what he intended

to say as he went through it systematically. He admits that these definitions do not completely capture everything that could be said about manhood and womanhood. This is only the start of a definition that highlights the complementary difference. And while there may be more to be said, there is certainly not less.

Piper addresses the men first. He shows that men have a responsibility to lead. It is an obligation, not a right, and should be treated as such. Again, because there may be confusion and the fact that leadership means different things to different people, Piper carefully goes through and articulates his intent. A man should leave this section with a sober mind about the task before him, but also with a very clear path to travel.

He then turns to the women and shows that mature femininity flows out of mature masculinity. He addresses the argument that gender roles restrict rather than free a person. He uses an illustration of a man jumping from an airplane without a parachute. It may feel freeing, but will only lead to a disastrous result. In fact, it was the restriction of the parachute that would have given him the freedom to jump.

Through both of these discussions, Piper allows for cultural changes, but within general guidelines. This means that what it looks like to be a man today may be different from 100 years ago, but in either circumstance the biblical definition of manhood and womanhood does not change. This is helpful to clarify, because there is a temptation to tie tradition or culture into our personhood and to redefine it, instead of grounding our identity in creation.

Piper then offers a vision of what ministry would be if we were

to adopt our specific roles. God created us with a specific design in mind. However, this design was distorted by sin, and even though Christians have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, we are still sinners. Sin has found its way into the church and cause a variety of problems. Although both sexes are generally at fault, Piper holds men especially accountable. He says, "The spiritual aimlessness and weakness and lethargy and loss of nerve among men is the major issue, not the upsurge of interest in women's ministries." However, this design is still recoverable by faith through the power of the Spirit. When men and women strive for mature manhood and mature womanhood it creates a beautiful picture of the Gospel, glorifies God, and results in a vibrant ministry.

This short book by John Piper would make a great addition to the library of every member of the church. It is a quick read, but packed to the brim with relevant material. Piper writes in a way that articulates every detail clearly, but he does so in a way that is easy to read. It is important to note that this book does not serve as an apologetic to other views, but simply lays out a biblical definition.

Gender roles are no longer taken for granted in our culture or even in many churches. Masculinity and Femininity are topics that have been under fire and a culture of confusion has been the result. As Christians we must know where we stand in the debate. Young Christians should read this book to be exposed to a clear articulation of a biblical view. Even seasoned Christians will learn from this book and it will serve as a refresher as they model proper roles to the younger generation. ■



Vacation Bible School

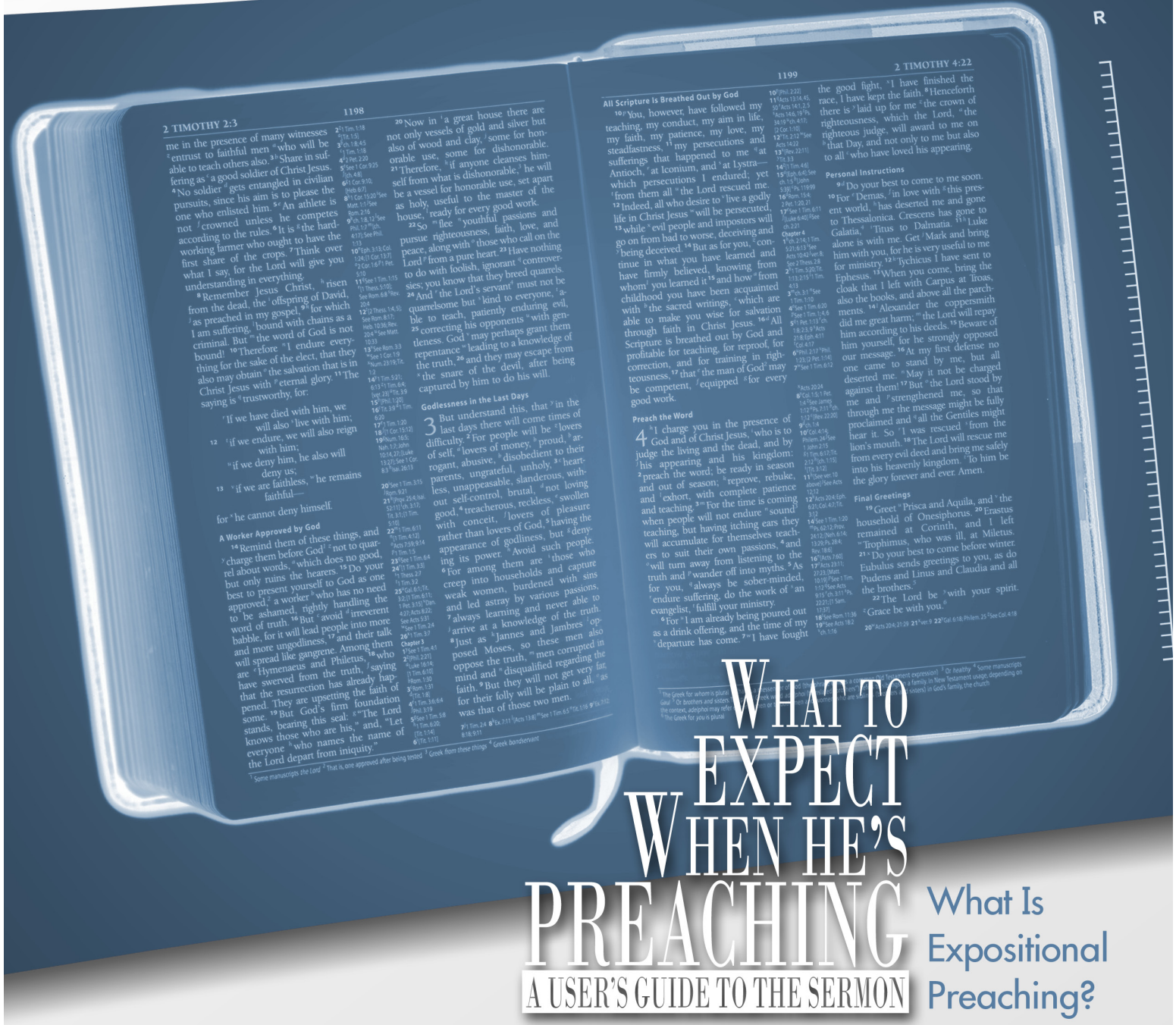
June 4-8

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WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN HE'S PREACHING

What Is Expositional Preaching?

THE GREATEST HUMAN BOOK PALES in comparison to the Bible. Ernest Hemingway may grab our attention with his sharp dialogue, but his words lack the power of the Sermon on the Mount. Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" may be America's finest, but it still cannot compare to Paul's passionate words of joy in Philippians or John's magnificent vision of heaven in Revelation.

The sixty-six books which make up our canon of Scripture are inspired by God, without error, and "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). God's Word feeds us, encourages us, and gives us hope.

A few years ago, I was leading a Bible study through the Gospel of Mark when a young woman blurted out with surprise and excitement, "I never realized the Bible was so interesting!" She is right. It's an amazing book full of robust conversations, penetrating insight, and lots of action. But it is more than an amazing book—it is the very Word of God.

This is why one of the best things a preacher can do is get out of the way and let the text speak. Barack Obama won the national spotlight when he gave a speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. His words inspired many and earned him a place in our national history, a place cemented when he was elected President in 2008.

Preachers, however, must not aspire to the national spotlight. The preacher's job is to preach Christ and get out of the way. The best way to do this is to preach expositional sermons.

Do not be intimidated by the term, "expositional" preaching. It comes from "exposition," as in a world "expo" where nations exhibit their greatest goods and ideas. An expositional sermon is simply an exhibition of the biblical text. Or think of it this way: in school a student might write an "exposition," which is a paper designed to shed light on a particular subject. An expositional sermon sheds light on a particular passage from the Bible.

In expositional preaching, the text of the Bible drives the message. Mark Dever put it well: “Expositional preaching is not simply producing a verbal commentary on a passage of Scripture. Rather, expositional preaching is that preaching which takes for the point of the sermon the point of a particular passage of Scripture.”

When you input your address into a GPS device, it dictates the path you will take. Likewise, the passage of Scripture that is preached should dictate the path of the sermon.

There are, of course, other kinds of sermons. Doctrinal sermons focus on a particular truth found in the Bible. Topical sermons focus on a subject treated by the Bible. Evangelistic sermons have as their main aim the conversion of sinners. In each of these cases, the preacher comes to the Bible with some sense of what he wants to accomplish. Each of these types of sermons can be very, very good. But the healthiest diet for the church is a steady serving of expositional preaching.

It is tempting for pastors to start preparing their sermons with certain questions already formulated. The questions may be excellent: “What should the men in my church know about fatherhood?” “What does the Bible say about work and leisure?” “How can we be better leaders?” But sometimes the Bible asks questions that we might not naturally ask ourselves. This is why an expositional sermon is the best way for a preacher to get out of the way and let the text speak.

The Biblical Basis for Expositional Preaching

God has always fed his people through expositional preaching. Moses stood before the people of Israel before they entered the Promised Land. He told them to stay rooted in God’s revelation. He told them to “listen” to what God had written for their instruction:

And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you. (Deut. 4:1-2)

Moses wasn’t making anything up, he was giving the people what God had given them. He was reminding them of God’s truth and freshly applying it to their lives (Deut. 4:13-14). Moses shed light on God’s Word for God’s people. In that sense, Moses preached expositionally.

This was the practice of Ezra the priest in the fifth century, BC. Ezra gathered the people together and he read from the Law:

And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. (Neh. 8:3)

After Ezra read the Law, the other priests followed suit. They read and explained God’s words to God’s people: “They read

from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading” (Neh. 8:8). So the people came to better understand the Word. But there’s more. The people worshiped: “And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, ‘Amen, Amen,’ lifting their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground” (Neh. 8:6).

We learn a valuable lesson from their response to Ezra’s teaching. The goal of preaching is not fundamentally the transfer of knowledge—though there must be a transfer of knowledge. The goal of preaching is not ultimately the understanding of doctrine—though there must be the understanding of doctrine. The preeminent goal of expositional preaching is the worship of God.

True Christians hunger to know more about God. They want to sense his vastness, experience his power, and reflect upon his love. Our lives are full of mundane tasks. The Bible is able to connect the mundane to the Maker of the Universe. Expositional preaching draws a line between the details of our lives and the majesty of our God.

Preaching should lead us to worship because that is why we were made. Each of us has been made in the image and the likeness of God. We all bear the imprint of God’s glory. That is why, deep down, we all long for the knowledge of our glorious God. Most people don’t even realize this, but God’s Word can awaken them to the reason for their existence. The best way to do this is to let God speak for himself. Expositional preaching submits our lives to God’s Word so that God’s people can worship him.

Ezra’s preaching led sinners made in the image and likeness of God to worship the God who made them. Ezra preached to people in need. Israel had become occupied territory. Ezra knew that only God could save their home and renew their hearts. By the power of the Spirit, Ezra’s audience was given a taste of a Savior who would one day redeem them.

I love the way music can stir the soul. A simple melody, accompanied by profound words, can affect the intellect and the emotions. Expositional preaching is like good music. It affects the heart as well as the mind. At the end of Ezra’s sermon the people had nothing to say but, “Amen.” They had nothing to do but bow their heads in worship. Keep in mind that Ezra did not come up with any new ideas, he simply explained the Word that God had already delivered to his people. He preached expositionally.

*The preeminent goal
of expositional preaching
is the worship of God.*

Jesus preached expositionally, too. He took the Hebrew Bible and explained it. One Sabbath Jesus went to the synagogue in Nazareth. This was his regular practice. Usually he listened. This day he preached:

And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. (Luke 4:17-22a)

It was a short sermon. Jesus simply read the passage and explained that Isaiah’s prophecy had been fulfilled. Jesus proclaimed himself to be the point of the text. The year of the Lord’s favor had now arrived. Jesus opened up and explained the Scriptures. In so doing, he models for us what to expect in preaching.

Read through the book of Acts and you will find that Jesus’ disciples also preached expositionally. They chose passages of Scripture and showed how Christ fulfilled each text. Peter preached from Joel 2, Psalm 16, and Psalm 110. He made these passages come alive because the point was finally clear. In Joel 2, Jesus is the one to usher in the Last Days. In Psalm 16, Jesus’ resurrection fulfilled David’s hope. In Psalm 110, Jesus reigns at the right hand of God the Father.

It should be no surprise that the greatest preachers throughout history worked through biblical texts. Men like Chrysostom, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Whitefield, and Edwards—they all opened God’s Word, read it and explained it. They delivered expository sermons.

At the very end of the Gospel of Matthew, we find this well-known charge, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20). Disciples must be taught. But what must they be taught? *All* that Jesus commanded. Read through the Gospels and you will see that Jesus commanded his disciples to *obey* the Scriptures. Now he is charging them to *teach* the Scriptures.

This makes sense of Paul’s instruction to Timothy, “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:1-2). Preachers are commanded to understand and explain Scripture. This is the work of expository preaching.

A painter applies paint and a sculptor chisels marble, but a preacher expounds Scripture. You should walk away from

sermons understanding God’s Word better. More to the point, you should walk away from sermons that don’t preach the Bible! As a preacher, my task is straightforward: to explain and apply the Bible. The best way to do this is through expository preaching.

It’s clear that expository preaching is biblical, but now let’s consider why it is so important.

The Personal Value of Expository Preaching

It exposes God’s agenda. Expository preaching is valuable because it exposes God’s agenda to us. We all fall into one of two camps. Maybe you fall into the first camp. You live life without an agenda. You wake up in the morning, go to work inside or outside the home, relax at night, and do it all again the next day. If there is a plan for you, you don’t really give it that much thought—you have no agenda.

Then there is the other camp. You have an agenda. It might be personal: marry by twenty-five, kids by thirty. It might be professional: college, graduate school, management, vice-president, ownership. You see every day of your life as one small step toward reaching your ultimate goal. So you see, some of us refuse to hold tightly to any agenda while others of us cling to our own agenda.

Both these paths are problematic for the Christian. The person without an agenda is like a ship without a rudder. It might get to the right place—but only because the wind happens to be blowing in the right direction. Meanwhile, the person with an agenda is constantly forced to wonder, “Is my agenda the right one? How can I know?”

This is why we need to allow God to set the agenda of our lives. Expository preaching does this beautifully because the Word constrains and humbles us. Beware of treating the Bible like a magic eight ball, constantly asking it questions but never stopping long enough to let the living Word question you. If we only go to the Word with topics in mind—asking God what He has to say about marriage, parenting, work, or whatever—we will never shut up long enough to let God drive the conversation.

Job had quite a few questions for God only to hear, “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me” (Job 38:2). God will question us. He will let us know his agenda. That’s one reason expository preaching is so valuable.

It exposes our need. Expository preaching is valuable because it exposes our need. We are all in desperate need of an honest assessment of our lives, of our sin. There once was a basketball coach who rebuked a player for not showing a strong defensive effort. The coach said, “A lot of guys act like they want to hear the truth. They always say, ‘Tell me the truth coach. Tell me the truth.’ You tell them, they run and hide or get mad and don’t want to talk to you for a while.”

We can be like that, can’t we? We think we want to be told the truth, but we don’t like it when we hear it. Worse than that, we may even try to avoid hearing the truth. It is not our shoddy

defense that needs to be pointed out. It is our shoddy hearts. When the Word of God is exposed, our sin is exposed as well.

Remember Jesus' ministry. He constantly pointed out how the religious leaders thought they were okay when, in reality, they were corrupt. It is not enough to try to be holy. To truly be a member of the family of God we need to see our sin. Only then will we see our need for the Savior. In that sense, God does more than tell us what to do. He tells us who we are. We are sinners who will never be good enough, never smart enough, never holy enough to deserve God's favor. That's why we need the righteousness of Christ!

When God's Word confronts us, we finally understand what happened to Isaiah when he saw the Lord. Isaiah cried out, "Woe to me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" (Isa. 6:5). A genuine encounter with God's Word produces a genuine encounter with our own sin.

"That's so discouraging!" you think. "Why should I have to be confronted by my sin week after week?" you ask. "Isn't it enough to know I'm a sinner, do we have to keep talking about it?"

These objections are natural because facing our sin for the first time or the fiftieth is never pleasant. But consider this: we will never appreciate what Jesus did until we appreciate who we are. We will never enjoy God until we understand our need for him.

The reason our worship of Jesus Christ is so often weak and lifeless is not because we don't *think* Jesus is great. It's because we have forgotten how much we need him. And we have forgotten how much we need him because we've forgotten who we are. That's why expositional preaching is so very important. It exposes us for who we really are and sends us humbly and joyfully to the Cross, where the Savior died for us.

C. H. Spurgeon spoke of two men running through a field of thorns. One man ran through the field wearing armor. When he had finished he was unharmed and unfazed. The armor protected him from every sting. The other man ran through the field without a shirt. When he was done, he was scraped, cut, and bloodied. The man in armor kept the Word at a distance. It never had an effect. The other man allowed the Word to expose him, even though it hurt. As difficult as it may be, we must let the Word expose us.

This is why I preach expositionally. I am convinced that when we carefully work through the Bible, God's Spirit will expose us for we really are, sinners in need of a Savior. This is why you should value expositional preaching. Only after we truly know who we are, we will joyfully come to Christ.

The words of Joseph Harts's eighteenth-century hymn say it well, "Come, ye sinners, poor and needy, weak and wounded sick and sore; Jesus ready stands to save you, full of pity, love, and power." Expositional preaching is valuable because it is uniquely suited to expose our need.

It exposes God's glory. Finally, expositional preaching is valuable because it exposes God's glory. The most exciting thing about expositional preaching is that it keeps our attention on

God. He is the Creator, Redeemer, and Lord. He is the Coming King. The Word of God is *his* Word. If we want to know him, then we need to know Scripture. It has been said many times before: when Scripture speaks, God speaks. Expositional preaching puts the focus on God.

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Jesus did until we appreciate
who we are.

As those who listen to preaching, our first priority should be to hear God speak so that we can know him better. We do not just need to know God's plan. We do not just need to know our sinfulness. We need to know God's nature, His character. To preach expositionally is to expose the glory of God.

My wife and I have been married sixteen years. I love her more now than ever. Why? In part because every year she proves to be more faithful. Like a blossom that grows increasingly beautiful with every passing day, I've seen greater degrees of faithfulness in her with every passing year.

She has cared for me when I'm sick. She has stood by me through anxiety. She has served and taught our kids. She has forgiven me more times than I can remember. And as the years have gone by I've seen wisdom in her; godly, attractive wisdom. The kind James talks about, "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere" (James 3:17). When I married her, would I have said she was faithful? Of course! Would I have said she was wise? Certainly! But having lived with her for so many years, I've had the chance to see what she's done and see who she is. Her life has been a living sermon to me that has led me to love her more and more. In a sense, as the years have gone by, I've seen her glory.

In a similar way, an expositional sermon exposes the glory of God. In sermon after sermon what God *has done* and who God *is* are made real to the listener. In some sermons, the glory of God hits us like a bolt of lightning crashing down from heaven. But more often than not, we experience his glory through a regular current of electricity that charges the spiritual batteries of our heart.

Expositional preaching is the best means of exposing the glory of God because these are the types of sermons that best unveil God's acts and his character.

I can think of no better way to spend Sunday after Sunday than opening God's Word and exposing our God of glory. May we desire and demand expositional preaching because it is biblical and may we love it because it exposes God's agenda, our identity, and, most importantly, God's glory. ■

~ Aaron Menikoff

This article is adapted from a sermon given on March 28, 2010.

May 2012

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	22	23	24	25	26
	29	30			

EVENTS ◀ ▶ BIRTHDAYS

Churchwide ▼

May 6 6:00 pm Lord's Supper

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

May 6 7:00 pm Lord's Supper Fellowship Meal
(See ad on page 1.)

May 20 4:30 pm Church in Conference

Members are encouraged to attend our next Church in Conference as we'll consider many matters related to the life of the church.

Adults ▼

April 16 12:00 pm RW&A Luncheon

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

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 2 Chris Yancey | 16 Josh Bradford |
| 3 George Camp | 17 Doug Padgett |
| Bob Seifert | Hank Sturgess |
| 4 Kathryn Searle | 18 Michael Monteymayor |
| 5 Michael Dawkins | 19 Jo Johnson |
| Caroline Pattillo | Bill Warren |
| 6 Mike Wilkinson | 20 Bill Mayes |
| 7 Pam Groslimond | 21 George Hynds |
| Jonathan Ludwikowski | Roy Payne |
| 8 Wayne Elliott | Don Roden |
| Jennifer Galloway | 22 Tom Ashworth |
| 9 Fred Boynton | Matt Reid |
| Ron Korthals | 23 Sue Houser |
| 10 Kevin Bemiss | 25 Lana Ball |
| Berkley Gryder | Hubert McLellan |
| Ron Wareham | Emily Yancey |
| 11 Jan Chastain | 26 Kristine Harris |
| 12 Greg Ford | 27 Joan Herdt |
| Doug Harmon | Beth Matz |
| Brook Henze | Dave Salzman |
| Peg Wharton | 28 Chuck Stone |
| 13 Jessi Lowman | 30 Alice Wareham |
| 14 Alice Faye Ashworth | 31 Charlotte Boynton |
| Marshall Dawkins | Susan Boynton |
| 15 Alan Herdt | Jean McLellan |
| Linda Sexton | |

Knowing

M V B C

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

- **Knowing Our Commitments: Church Covenant**
- **Knowing Our Beliefs: Statement of Faith**
- **Knowing Our Structure: Leadership**
- **Knowing How to Be Involved: Discipling & Serving**

Anyone interested in membership or knowing more about life at Mount Vernon is invited to **Knowing MVBC**. All four sessions will be offered Sunday, May 6, during the Sunday School hour (session 1) and from 12:15-2:30 pm (sessions 2-3). Lunch will be provided.

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



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