

PERSPECTIVE

THE MONTHLY JOURNAL OF MOUNT VERNON BAPTIST CHURCH

Characteristics of a True Friend



Welcome to Mount Vernon!

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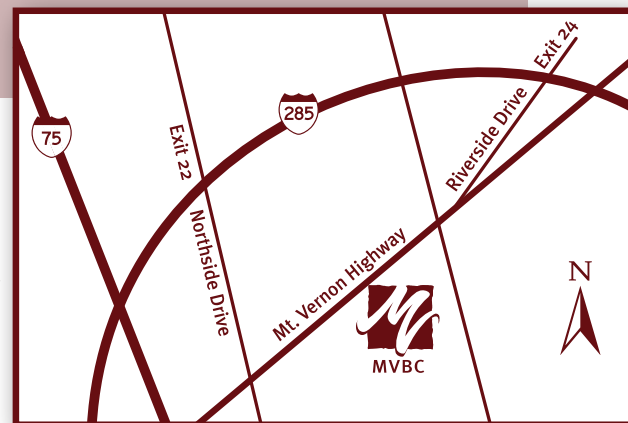
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SERMON SCHEDULE

- October 4 *A Love Story: Commitment*
Ruth 4:1-12
- October 11..... *A Love Story: Consummation*
Ruth 4:13-22
- October 18..... *The End Is Near*
Joel 1:1-2:17
- October 25..... *Living As God's People*
1 Peter 2:4-12
Assistant Pastor: Brad Thayer



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OCTOBER 30, 2009

7:00 PM

TICKETS: \$15

Sign up at Wednesday night supper and at Connections Corner starting Sunday, September 15.

Silent Auction
7:30 pm - 10:00 pm

Featuring Swing Music from
the Truett-McConnell Jazz Band

Dinner Music provided by David Carnes

Dance Lessons provided by Atlanta Dance

Master of Ceremonies
David Nash

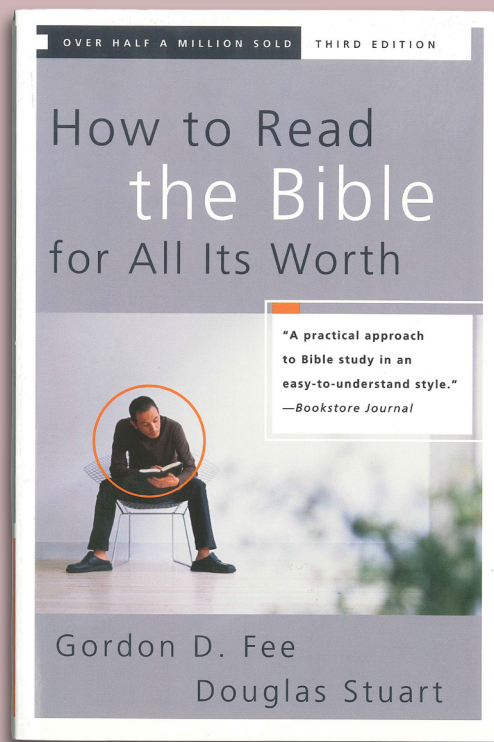


Sponsored by the Missions Committee.
Childcare will be provided by reservation only. Please call 404-255-3133 to make a reservation.



a 4-week series through the book of Joel
beginning October 18

Of This We Can Be Sure...



How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth

by
Gordon D. Fee
and
Douglas Stuart

Reviewed by Tony Higgins

Introduction

Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart are fairly clear with their purpose in writing *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Their aim: to help believers learn to ask the right questions when interpreting Scripture so that they can apply in their lives what they’ve learned, in a manner that is faithful to the biblical text (14-15). It is precisely a lack of faithfulness to the text on the part of the average lay person—at least in the sense of how the text of Scripture is meant to be read in it’s various forms—that is the authors’ main concern. In fact, Fee and Stuart believe that today a “frightening large number of people” are, by and large, “biblically illiterate.” It’s with this understanding in mind that they shape their work toward an audience whom, they assume, are: 1) certainly unfamiliar with the original biblical languages, but even more so 2) are unacquainted with the various literary genres that are found in the Bible. Thus, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* is literally that—how to **read** the Bible, as a precursor to learning to study the Bible.

Summary

The book is basically broken into two parts. Chapters one and two serve as a launching pad, of sorts. Here, the authors provide some general guidelines and suggested tools for interpreting Scripture. Chapters three through thirteen are the real heart of

the text. The authors walk through ten basic literary genres found in Scripture, giving some very precise suggestions for how to get to the main point of the text; that being, what the various biblical authors intended their specific audience(s) to understand through the words they wrote.

Woven through each chapter are principles related to two of the primary means by which to correctly interpret Scripture: the task of exegesis, and the task of hermeneutics (chapter 1). For Fee and Stuart, to exegete a passage of Scripture correctly is to get into the minds and lives of the original recipients of the text, as a means to understand “the original intent of the words of the Bible” (29). Here, the number one way to understand the biblical author’s original intent is to understand both the historical context to which the author wrote and literary contexts in which the author wrote. It is only by understanding the “then and there” (exegesis) that engulfs the text that one can hope to understand the “here and now” or the current-day applicable truths of Scripture, which is the goal of hermeneutics.

Given that Fee and Stuart assume their readers will be somewhat bound to an English language translation, it’s not surprising then that they spend an entire chapter (chapter 2) on how to select an appropriate version of Scripture both for private devotional reading and for more intensive study. For primary Bible reading, the authors position

themselves as preferring a version that is more *functionally* equivalent in comparison to the original languages, rather than one that is more *formally* equivalent. Here, the authors believe it is more important to read a faithful rendition of the *intent* of the original writers than a faithful rendition of the exact *words* the writers used in communicating his intent. To this end, Fee and Stuart suggest, “the TNIV is as good a translation as you will get” (52). For more intensive study, it’s recommended one use multiple translations, along the range of formal to functional equivalency.

In chapters three and four, the authors turn their attention away from preparing one for the dual tasks of exegesis and hermeneutics toward the actual act of doing some exegetical and hermeneutical work. They use select passages found in the New Testament Epistles to, in a sense, mentor the reader through the process of doing proper exegesis and hermeneutics. Recognizing, again, that their readers are probably not savvy biblical exegetes, Fee and Stuart are careful to encourage their readers time and again that, with proper care and attention to the correct details and the original context of Scripture, one can faithfully interpret Scripture.

Chapters five through thirteen each handle a separate genre of Scripture, but the chapters themselves basically follow the same pattern as chapters three and four. First, the authors mention a few of the primary exegetical concerns related to each genre. Then they provide a very cursory example of how one might exegete other passages of the same genre. Finally, examples of how one would move from exegesis to application are provided.

In all of these chapters, Fee and Stuart are clear in pointing out their belief that the “great flaw” in regard to hermeneutics is one of not having a consistent hermeneutic. They mention that, “a text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its author or his or her readers” (74). Yet, the authors believe that trying to make the text say something it was never intended to say is precisely what many individuals do when they try to interpret Scripture. And what’s the major culprit, here? As with exegesis, it’s context.

Fee and Stuart believe that in the act of hermeneutics, many individuals read their own current context—their own norms and biases—back into the text. Thus, when it comes to applying the text to one’s life, the principles “found” in the text look surprisingly familiar to their own current actions. The corrective is equally familiar; discovering what a biblical author intended to say to his original audience is the key to discovering what God would intend to say, through that same text, to His reader today.

Fee and Stuart are realistic in their assessment that most individuals attempting in-depth exegesis

and hermeneutics for the first time will require some kind of help along the way. To this end, they are wise to include many references to additional study aids. Likewise, they conclude this book with a short but comprehensive guide to some excellent commentaries with which one can grasp a fuller understanding of the historical and literary contexts of Scripture, as well as how such Scripture might apply to one’s life.

Evaluation

In all, there are many commendable features found in *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Their choice of the TNIV as the translation of choice is not one of them. The TNIV deviates from the authors’ original intended meaning—especially when it comes to gender inclusive language. Though Fee and Stuart do not recommend the translation I use, the NASB (they argue this translation is too literal), I just don’t find this argument convincing. In reality, whether a text is wooden when read, or not, probably has more to do with one’s familiarity with that version of Scripture. Likewise, the NIV, though not my preference, does not suffer from the same deficiencies as the TNIV.

A positive feature of this book is the comprehensiveness of sources to which the authors point. The list of commentaries (see Appendix) is thorough. The other cited references found throughout this work are all very commendable.

Yet, in the end, in part due to the comprehensive quality of this book, I found myself asking if this book really hit its desired audience. In short, probably not—at least not without some direction and support from someone somewhat familiar with both exegesis and hermeneutics. There is no doubt that this is an excellent book. For either a new believer or one who is a novice interpreter, however, there are several good study Bibles on the market, any number of which cover much of the same material covered in this book, any of which I would rather put into their hands as a personal study source.

However, there are good uses for this book. For Sunday School or small group teacher training, this book could serve as an excellent resource. Likewise, with some intentionality, this book could work as a good small group resource—either for new believers or those just seeking a “refresher” course in Bible reading. ☺

Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas Stuart. 2003. *How to read the Bible for All Its Worth*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. \$16.99

[illegible]

Paul Tripp, author of *Instruments In the Redeemer's Hands*, argues that our theology should be grounded in love:

Without love, our theology is a boat without oars. Love is what drove God to send and sacrifice his Son. Love led Christ to subject himself to a sinful world and the horrors of the cross. Love is what causes him to seek and save the lost, and to persevere until each of his children is transformed into his image. His love will not rest until all his children are at his side in glory. The hope of every sinner does not rest in theological answers but in the love of Christ for his own. Without it, we have no hope personally, relationally, or eternally.¹

That last sentence is all-encompassing. Without the love of Christ we will be without hope personally, relationally, eternally. This rings of Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:1, “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal” (1 Cor. 13:1).

This truth can be applied to friendships. The only “hope” of truly relating to other people is rooted in the love of Christ; a love that we receive and experience upon conversion and a love that we exercise as part of our ongoing sanctification.

Every Christian ought to have what historian Michael Haykin referred to as “spiritual friendships.”² “A friend loves at all times,” wrote Solomon in Proverbs 17:7. In other words, a friend

¹Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 117.

²See Michael Haykin, "Custos Animae: Spiritual Friendship in the Scriptures and In Church History." Paper presented to author.

is characterized by consistent, supportive, sustained love.

Though there are relatively few texts in the book of Proverbs that explicitly address friendship, this compendium of wisdom is full of insights that should guide how we befriend others. Proverbs is a book of gritty, hearty, and divine wisdom. It presents us with a God who is to be feared, wisdom which is to be embraced, and foolishness which is to be avoided at all costs. By God's grace, we can know how to be a friend by studying this ancient book. We glean many traits of a spiritual friend from these chapters. Here are five characteristics of a true friend.

First, a true friend is humble. Jesus said “blessed are the meek” (Matt. 5:5). It should, therefore, be no surprise that spiritual friends are marked by a remarkable humility. “Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice” (Prov. 13:10). A true friend knows to admit his need and accept help from others.

True, all counsel must be measured against the rule of Christ's perfect law. Nonetheless, a wise man or woman will happily humble himself by seeking and, where appropriate, accepting the counsel of others.

A spiritual friend will display humility by graciously accepting a rebuke. "He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise" (Prov. 15:31). The flesh objects to being corrected, even when the correction is true and helpful. A good friend will meekly receive a rebuke and seek to grow closer to Christ in the process. Being rebuked is not a pleasant experience, but it is sanctifying.

Pride will work against good, godly, spiritual friendships. This is because pride isolates us from others by exalting the self. C. J. Mahaney put it well, "Pride takes innumerable forms but has only one end: self-glorification."³ It is impossible to glorify ourselves and be humble before the Lord. Such self-glorification looms like the Great Wall of China between us and those we love.

to protect us from arrogance while making us receptive to the correction of others, Proverbs insists we display our humility by being slow to speak. “A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered” (Prov. 17:27). An even-tempered man is a wonderful friend. He is not eager to impose his opinions and he will not erupt when he does not get his way. Instead of inciting, his lips calm others down: “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Prov. 15:1). I can’t help but think of Harper Lee’s character from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Atticus Finch. Humble yet resolute.

Second, a true friend is forgiving. Try as we may to be humble, to speak properly, to speak rarely, the truth of the matter is we do sin. “Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man who can find?” (Prov. 20:6) A faithful man cannot be found. We will be unfaithful, uncheerful, insubordinate, and just plain stupid. How can a spiritual friendship exist in the midst of immorality? Because forgiveness also exists!

Holiness requires that we not only humbly accept a rebuke from others but that we boldly overlook the wrongdoing of others. C. S. Lewis was right when he wrote, "To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the

C. J. Mahaney, *Humility: True Greatness* (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah Press, 2005), 32.

inexcusable in you.”⁴

Proverbs overflows with the wisdom of forgiveness. “Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs” (Prov. 10:12). Spiritual friends will be marked by a gracious spirit. They will overlook the wrongs of others. This is not *always* true but it is *normally* true. Book publishers have fact-checkers. How many churches have fault-checkers? Fault-checkers do not make good, spiritual friends.

And so Solomon warned his son that to grip too tightly to the wrong inflicted by a friend is a surefire way to lose a friendship. “He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends” (Prov. 17:9). We cannot presume that even a close friendship can withstand the failure to forgive.

It is impossible to underestimate the importance of friendship. Not only does an unforgiving spirit separate close friends, it makes fellowship with God impossible. As Jesus said, “But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matt. 6:15).

Some wrongs are so egregious, so heinous that though forgiveness is demanded the friendship cannot be repaired. This is the reality of life in a fallen world. But the refusal to forgive guarantees irreparable harm to the friendship.

Third, a true friendship is generous. Good friendships are marked by cheerful generosity. Though there can be generosity without love there cannot be love without generosity. It is not loving for a husband to buy his wife's affection with flowers and gems. That is bribery. But if a husband loves his wife, he will delight in giving her large and small gifts. So it is with every friendship. Time, words, dreams, ideas, and things are generously given.

A true friendship is ground zero
for the **exercise of LOVE.**

If a righteous man cares for the needs of his animals (Prov. 12:10), how much more will he care for the needs of his friends? We are not to withhold good from our neighbors (Prov. 3:27) and neither should we withhold good from our friends.

Generosity is not about the quantity of stuff given. “Better a meal of vegetables where there is love than a fattened calf with hatred” (Prov. 15:17). Solomon repeatedly warned his son that when this principle is forgotten the rich will be surrounded by false friends (Prov. 14:20; 19:4, 7).

On the contrary, in a spiritual friendship the gift does not need to be tangible. “He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend” (Prov. 22:11). A spiritual friend generously gives others gracious, honest, and clear praise.

Fourth, a true friend is faithful. Think of Ruth's commitment to follow Naomi into a strange land. God's people are to be marked by this kind of steadfast love. "Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man" (Prov. 3:3-4).

Faithfulness is evident in kind words. "The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life; but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit" (Prov. 15:4).

Faithfulness is evident in kind deeds. "If a man pays back evil

⁴C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (New York: Harper Collins, 1949), 182.

for good, evil will never leave his house."

To say that “a friend loves at all times” (Prov. 17:17) is to say a friend is faithful. Perhaps this is why we are told that “a righteous man is cautious in friendship” (Prov. 12:26). Certainly this means we are to choose our friends wisely. We should avoid bad influences (Prov. 1:10-19; 4:14-19). But could it also mean that before we commit to “love at all times” we should count the cost? Without being stingy in our relationships, there is a difference between being a good neighbor and being a good friend. A good *neighbor* will sacrifice everything in a time of need. A good *friend* will sacrifice always. Again, “a friend loves at *all times*.” A true friend is faithful.

Fifth, a true friend is God-fearing. Relationships, be they with a lover, a family member, or a friend, can be idolized as easily as food, sex, or money. However, a spiritual friend will not allow those he loves to be his or her ultimate source of strength or guidance. He or she reserves that role for God. He makes it clear to those around him that God is the strength of his heart and his portion forever (Psa. 73:26).

The overarching theme of Proverbs is that the source of wisdom is found in the fear of the LORD (Prov. 1:7). And so we are not told to trust in ourselves or in our friends but in our LORD (Prov. 3:5). After all, “a man’s steps are directed by the LORD. How then can anyone understand his own way?” (Prov. 20:24)

A spiritual friend will not seek to provide what God alone can provide. A spiritual friend will not ask more from a friend than he knows that person can give. In a sense, a spiritual friend will, however imperfectly, point those around him to the LORD.

Who are the people in your life who lead you to love Christ, depend upon Christ, and worship Christ? They may very well be your closest friends. John's words to Gaius are instructive. He cared for the body *and* the soul. "Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well" (3 Jn. 2).

James Boswell was a good friend to the famous author Samuel Johnson (1709-1784). Johnson, a Christian, was old enough to be Boswell's father. Their lives overlapped enough for Boswell to take copious notes and publish the work that made Johnson famous, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*.

Johnson willingly expressed his love for Boswell. He also pointed Boswell to the Savior. Boswell recorded a scene where the two visited a church before they parted company. In these words, Johnson's faithfulness and fear of God are both evident:

...and having gone into it and walked up to the altar, Johnson, whose piety was constant and fervent, sent me to my knees, saying, 'Now that you are going to leave your native country, recommend yourself to the protection of your Creator and Redeemer.'...My revered friend walked down with me to the beach, where we embraced and parted with tenderness, and engaged to correspond by letters. I said, 'I hope, Sir, you will not forget me in my absence.' JOHNSON. 'Nay, Sir, it is more likely you should forget me, than that I should forget you.'⁵

A true friendship is ground zero for the exercise of love. May we be a humble, forgiving, generous, kind, and God-fearing friend. 🙏

~ Aaron Menikoff

⁵Cited by Christopher Hibbert in his introduction to James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (London: Penguin Books, 1979), 15.

Mount
Vernon
Dialogues:
A Series of Theological and Cultural Discussions

Topic
*What Does Islam Have
to Do with Christianity?*

Guest Speaker
Dr. Michael Haykin

Born in England of Irish and Kurdish parents, Dr. Haykin is currently Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. His expertise is in the Early Church Fathers. He has authored several books including his latest release *The God Who Draws Near: An Introduction to Biblical Spirituality*. Dr. Haykin, his wife Alison, and their two children, Victoria and Nigel, live in Dundas, Ontario.



Saturday, November 20, 2009
7:00 pm



Let the little children come to
me, and do not hinder them
for the kingdom of God
belongs to such as these.

Mark 10:14

God's Kingdom is alive and well! It is eternal, encompassing past, present, and future. God is building His Kingdom one person at a time. We are "living stones" firmly cemented upon the strong foundation of Jesus Christ, the Cornerstone (1 Peter 2:6).

Kingdom Kids is Mount Vernon's new children's ministry theme. It is not a fantasy world of princes and princesses, but a real kingdom that has no end with a real King, the one true God and King of Kings! God is righteous and holy, who loved us so much that He sent His only son, Jesus, into the world to die for our sins then raised Him from the dead (John 3:16).

Kingdom Rules

Children will learn:

- **Who God Is** – Their Creator and sovereign Authority to be worshipped.
- **Who Jesus Is** – God's Son, Savior, Lord, Servant, and King.
- **Who They Are** – Children created wonderfully in God's image to worship Him.
- **How to Live** – In obedience to the King by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

Kingdom Character

The gospel is central to everything. No one enters the Kingdom unless they repent and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is our prayer that every child will turn from their sin, trust in Jesus as their Savior, and become a vital member of God's Kingdom, loving and serving fellow believers and others.

Furthermore, the members of God's Kingdom are unique and distinct from the kingdom of this world. They are growing in the character of Christ in order to glorify God and serve others. Children will learn character traits beginning with the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22.

Kingdom Worship

Children will begin each Sunday with corporate worship in the Kingdom Chapel, a.k.a RED Zone, at 9:15 am. Sunday School will include a Bible lesson with Scripture reading based on the day's character trait, a memory verse to be reinforced by parents at home, and prayer using the A.C.T.S. method (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication.) Other activities include an offering collection, a craft pertaining to the Bible story, and, at times, a service project.

Kingdom Opportunities

The Children's Ministry Team and volunteers ask for your continued prayers. Pray that God will do an amazing work in each child's heart and mind by transforming him/her into the likeness of Christ as we search the Scriptures, worship, pray, and fellowship. Pray also for God's leading and creativity in the Sunday School teaching.

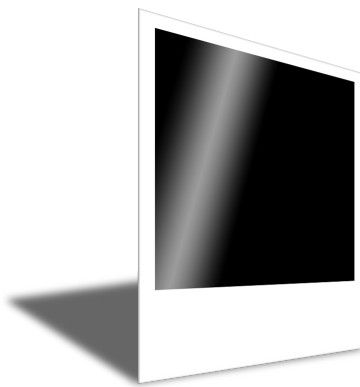
We also need volunteers for MVP, RED Zone, and Wednesday Night activities. It is a wonderful opportunity to influence His children's lives in this culture for Jesus Christ!

Again, we are His "living stones" at Mount Vernon investing in the next generation so "they will put their trust in God and would not forget His deeds but would keep His commands" (Psalm 78:7). 🙏

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
October						
				1	2	3
4 6:00pm Lord's Supper	5 7:00pm Singles' Monday Night Dinner	6	7	8	9	10
11 9:15am First Look 12:30pm Airsoft Afternoon	12	13	14	15	16	17
18 4:30pm Church in Conference	19 12:00pm RW&A Luncheon	20	21	22	23	24
25 10:30am Guest Preacher: Brad Thayer	26	27	28	29	30 7:00pm USO	31
Events Key <div>Churchwide</div> <div>New Members</div> <div>Missions</div> <div>Youth</div> <div>Preschool</div> <div>Children (1st-6th grade)</div> <div>Women</div> <div>Adults</div>						

Happy Birthday!

1	Renee Drexler	15	Pete Vanderzee
	Patty Stanfield	16	Inez McDonald
2	Buddy Ennis	17	Tommy McNeese
	Mary Anne Knowles		Carolyn Roberts
3	Barbara Bear	18	Scott Houser
	Parks Houser	19	Pat Orchard
	Martha Morgan	20	Paige Clayton
	Stephanie Morris		Stephanie Morris
	Jerry Sexton	21	Marilyn Early
4	Bo Hamby		Lark Ivester
	Aaron Menikoff		Richard Sweet
5	Chip Cofer		Jeanette Wallace
	Evelyn Wells	22	Megan Gryder
6	Shirley Ennis	23	Rebecca Long
	Don Rozema	24	Rebecca Reagan
7	Gerry Chatham	25	Rhonda Hatley
	Carey Louthan		Dawn Lamprecht
9	Patrick Peon		Jerrie Woodward
	David Scott	26	Nick Birmingham
11	Jim Bryant		Chad Zimmerman
	Ed Goodgame	29	Suzanne Timmons
	Becky King		Daniell Yancey
12	Margaret Boomhower	31	Wynette Fleming
13	Betty Lowndes		Andy McGill
	Ron Williams		Terri Walker



Pictorial Directory

Pictures will be taken every Wednesday (5-6 pm) and Sunday (12-1:30 pm) in October.

If you missed signing up in September, you may still reserve a time slot, but spaces will be limited.

→ **LORD'S SUPPER**
OCTOBER 4 - 6:00 PM
We will be celebrating the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection during the evening service. We encourage members to examine their hearts and relationships with one another in preparation.

→ **FIRST LOOK**
OCTOBER 11 - 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.

→ **AIRSOFT AFTERNOON**
OCTOBER 11 - 12:30 PM
Come join the youth for an afternoon of Airsoft! The cost is \$10 and will include lunch and equipment usage. You can use your own equipment or the church's. All BB's must be biodegradable and approved before use. Contact Jacob Hall at jacobhall@mvbchurch.org for more information. Bring your friends.

→ **CHURCH IN CONFERENCE**
OCTOBER 18 - 4:30 PM
Church family, we are having our regularly scheduled Church in Conference. Please make a point to attend. We will be considering many matters related to the life of the church.

→ **USO**
OCTOBER 30 - 7:00 PM
The USO (Ukranian Salvation for Orphans) is a special night of dinner, jazz music, swing dancing, and a silent auction of vacation packages and unique items from all over the world. The cost is only \$15 and proceeds support Mount Vernon's missions endeavors in the Ukraine.



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