

January 2014

Volume VII
Issue 1

Perspective

the journal of mount
vernon baptist church

Perspective is a monthly journal with articles and book reviews. It is part of the “equipping” ministry of Mount Vernon Baptist Church, where we exist to KNOW, EQUIP, and SEND one another for the worship and glory of God.

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The Sin of Indifference

John 12:1–11

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Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Proverbs 3:5–6 (ESV)

Building a Culture of Generosity

Brad Thayer

For the last two years, the Elders have been discussing different ways we would like to see MVBC grow by 2017. We have described these as “5 culture-shifts.” They are a culture of evangelism, discipleship, family care, generosity, and serving other churches. (A summary of each one may be found in the September 2013 edition of the *Perspective* by visiting www.mvbchurch.org/perspective.) We are not wanting to be novel but faithful to the simple command to “contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). We believe that these 5 culture-shifts warrant our attention. In this article, I am focusing on a “culture of generosity.”

When I was a teenager, the Internal Revenue Service gave me my first lesson in managing money. I knew government was necessary. Yet, it always seemed to be something distant and impersonal. At least that was how it felt until I experienced the sudden shock of my paycheck being a lot less than expected because of taxes. The government then became very personal, and I became convinced that I had to learn how to manage money.

Managing money isn't always easy, but we all have to do it. Not only do I have the responsibility for overseeing my family's income and expenses, but every day I attend to Mount Vernon's considerable budget. I try to keep in mind, at home and at the church, that managing money is more than ensuring that you do not spend more than you receive. Not only that, it is more than saving for an unknowable future. Managing money involves using everything you have for the glory of God. As Christians, we are responsible and accountable to God for using money for his sake. That goes far beyond budgeting and saving.

In this article, I want to focus on an essential component of managing money for the glory of God: financial generosity. I pray that these words will encourage you to consider how you can use whatever God has given you to honor him, serve the saints, help the poor, and evangelize the lost.

The Bible is clear that Christians are to be characterized by financial generosity, especially for

the purpose of gospel ministry (Acts 2:42-47; 2 Cor. 8-9; 1 Tim. 6:18). God will hold us accountable for how we spend our money. Every swipe of the credit card feels a lot different when you consider that “God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Eccl. 12:14).

We want to keep this in mind as a church. It's important to remember this central truth that our financial stewardship is ultimately under God's oversight. What does it look like for us to be generous? What does it look like for our church to be characterized by generosity? What is a culture of generosity? *A culture of generosity is found in a church whose members, because of their love for God, steward their financial resources in order to give sacrificially for the work of gospel ministry.*

Culture of Generosity

There is no area of society devoid of culture. Every corporation, university, home, and church has a unique culture. You can't escape it! As Aristotle noted, if you want to know what it's like to be wet, you don't ask a fish. “Wet” is his culture. For us, a culture is simply the *values* of Mount Vernon that we tend to take for granted—just like that fish. We want to see a culture of generosity grow in our church. As we faithfully steward our finances in order to give sacrificially and abundantly for gospel ministry, it will be clear that we *value* glorifying God with everything we have—including our money.

This is explicitly stated in our Church Covenant where it says we will “contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expense of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.” This is a value that we regularly affirm at our Church in Conferences and when we celebrate the Lord's Supper.

Values and norms are not, however, deeply rooted in the church's culture until they become implicit. In

other words, they should be second nature to us. Such is the case with expositional teaching and preaching. Our desire and expectation for faithful, expositional teaching is dripping from all areas of our church's life because it is an explicit and implicit cultural value and norm. The same is true for many other wonderful truths and practices of the Christian life at Mount Vernon.

But is it so with financial generosity? Increasingly so. Can it grow? It can, and it starts with stating our biblical convictions regarding generosity. When it comes to financial generosity, Randy Alcorn put it well: "We need more than a class on budgeting and financial planning. We need a *Bible-based, Christ-centered theology* of money and possessions that tackles critical stewardship issues pertaining to all Christians" (*Managing God's Money: A Biblical Guide*, 236, emphasis added).

In the next few paragraphs, I want to unpack two "Bible-based, Christ-centered" convictions that must be deeply planted in our hearts and minds so that MVBC can be marked by a culture of generosity.

Convictions of Generosity

First, God is the owner of all things, and he has entrusted us as human beings made in his image and Christians remade in the image of his Son to steward everything, including our finances, for his intended purposes. Generosity begins with God, who is the Creator and, thus, the owner of all things. "The earth is the LORD'S and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers" (Ps. 24:1-2). Notice how David connects God's ownership of the entire earth with the fact that he created it – "for he has founded it . . . and established it." This idea echoes throughout the entire Bible: because God created all things he owns all things (see Deut. 10:14; Job 41:11; Ps. 50:10-12). Obviously, this includes our finances.

So, God owns all the world. But he has entrusted his world to be stewarded (managed) by us. God created us to be his representatives on earth. He commanded us to manage his creation for his glory. After God created the man and woman, he "blessed them" and "said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply

and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on earth'" (Gen. 1:28-30, cf. 2:18-20). So there it is: God made us as his image-bearers to manage his creation under his authority and for his intended purposes.

What does this have to do with a culture of generosity? It means that we do not just steward our finances but *all things* well. It may be a cliché, but it is true that if you want to see what people value, look at their calendar and checkbook (or credit card statement to bring it out of the 1990s!). We should faithfully manage *everything* God has given us – time, relationships, gifts, responsibilities, finances, etc. It is usually true that those who are financially disciplined are disciplined in other areas of their life as well. Think of your financial management as a sort of barometer of how you manage the rest of your life. In other words, finances are a window into a lifestyle of faithful stewardship.

Of course, we all fail in our stewardship. Ever since the fall, sin has distorted our ability to be good financial stewards. We are now tempted to idolize money. Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money" (Mt. 6:24). There may be no better example of trying to serve two masters than Ananias and Sapphira, who gave a little to God's work and selfishly kept a little aside for themselves (Acts 5:1-11). When their double-minded worship and negligent stewardship was revealed, they "fell down and breathed their last" (Acts 5:5, 10). That is quite the contrast to what the Christians who were faithful in giving received – "great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:33). Idolizing money is spiritually dangerous.

Clearly some people think about money too much. They want it so badly they idolize it. But some of us sin in the other direction; we don't give enough attention to the money God has allowed us to accumulate. To put it simply: we ignore money. Solomon said, "Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds, for riches do not last forever; and does a crown endure to all generations" (Prov. 27:23-24)? For years my

financial management was pretty simple – (1) Give 10% of my gross income to the church; (2) Never be late on any debt or bill; (3) Never let my checking account balance get below a certain dollar amount. Admittedly, there could be worse ways to manage your money. Yet, I really wasn't giving "attention to my herds." I was ignoring where most of my money was going. I didn't spend too much, but I did spend recklessly. I could have done so much more with my money if only I'd given more attention to where it was going. As a result, I ended up being much less generous than I could have been. If you ignore money then you are not actively planning for how you can be generous.

At this point, it would be good to remember that only Jesus Christ was the perfect steward. He made good use of everything entrusted to his care. He perfectly trusted God to provide (Lk 9:58). He knew when to go without—he had no place to lay his head. But he also knew how to enjoy wealth—he commended Mary for anointing him with oil. Jesus is our perfect model. There are times when we need to enjoy the resources God gave us and there are times to sacrifice for the sake of others.

The key is to increasingly grow into the image of Christ, and this means trusting God with everything we have. As a fellow administrative pastor and friend helpfully put it, "When you give, you are writing a little declaration of independence from your money;" thus, proving you trust in God.

So let me ask you a couple of questions: First, are you actively and thoughtfully budgeting your personal finances? Faithful stewardship will be evidenced by your active planning for how to use everything God has given you. Second, are you seeking help and accountability in how you save, spend, and give your money? Within the church, there should be relational accountability for how you steward your finances. Ask others what method or tools they use for budgeting. I have had a number of conversations with members recently where we exchanged personal budgeting philosophies, tips, and tools. We did not always discuss monetary details. Yet, the conversation was as natural as if we were discussing routine prayer requests.

In summary, a culture of generosity begins with the conviction that God has created all things and entrusted to us the responsibility to manage them accordingly. We are often poor stewards because of sin, the sin of idolizing or ignoring money. But by the transforming grace of God we begin to see our finances as a tool for ministry that should be given generously.

That leads to the second conviction: *the gospel is the ultimate motivator for sacrificial generosity.*

I need a clutter-free space in order to work, otherwise I can't concentrate and will be unproductive. Have you ever considered how money and possessions can clutter your heart and keep you from concentrating on your relationship to God? Let's face it, money can become a source of constant distraction and anxiety (Mt. 6:25; Lk. 12:22). Jesus knew this to be the case, so he said, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Lk. 12:32-34). This doesn't mean we all have to take a vow of poverty, but it does mean we have to be mindful that God cares about our heart. The rich and poor alike can put their treasures in things that can be stolen and destroyed.

Thankfully, no Christian has to worry. Our heavenly Father has given us what we need most – his "kingdom." We have everything we could possibly need! We are told not to "fear" because it is his desire to give us his kingdom, i.e., eternal life. Thus, if he has given us his kingdom and all its treasures then we need not worry about finances (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9). Only the gospel can free us from being anxious about money. If you are a Christian your sins have been paid for; you are no longer on the path to hell. God has provided everything you need in Christ through his work on the cross. You are no longer owned by your sin; you are owned by God. And that means he will take care of you. So you don't have to worry. You may not have much, but by God's grace, you have everything you need to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Do you see, then, how the gospel frees you to give generously? Whether you have a lot or a little, you can give some of what you have away in light of Scripture's call to sacrificial giving. The Father has given us his kingdom. Out of this abundance we can give generously to others. Amazingly, this kind of giving—sacrificial giving—proves that we value God and his kingdom more than our finances and possessions. Every signed check, every electronic fund transfer, and every click of the “complete payment” for gospel ministry shows that we value and trust God supremely. Jesus said, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Your heart is tethered to your treasure, not vice versa. When you give of that treasure, you are testifying that your heart is tethered to the treasure of God's kingdom. Give generously because God gave even more abundantly than we ever could!

Please understand that we will not all be able to give as much as each other. God has blessed some of us with greater wealth than others. The question is not, fundamentally, “How much do you give in comparison to your neighbor?” but, “How much do you give in light of the gospel?” Right leadership of the congregation about giving focuses on the gospel, not guilt. Jesus' exhortation is to give because God has been faithful, not because we have been unfaithful. The Holy Spirit will convict an individual of his or her unfaithfulness.

How does this truth build a culture of generosity? Members will give freely to the local church. That's why the Elders and Deacon of Finance regularly exhort us to give generously. Giving is part of the gospel ministry at Mount Vernon. They recognize that gospel ministry includes gospel-giving for the furtherance of God's kingdom. We should desire to be a church which funds biblically faithful ministry that has as its priority seeing God's kingdom preached to every man, woman, and child on earth.

But it is not only giving to the church for evangelism and discipleship that is part of a culture of generosity. This culture is also evidenced by members who give among themselves, as they see need. I know of numerous testimonies where one member has given directly to another to either help in a time of need or to just encourage them. Such

giving is often done in secret and rightly so. When I hear of those testimonies, I am excited because I am witnessing gospel-centered generosity up close and personal.

A culture of generosity built on the gospel is also reflected in lives of contentment. If we have been given the kingdom and everything necessary for life (Lk. 12:22-24) then we should be the most content people in this world. Is it evident in our conversations and lifestyles that we are content with what we have been given? This extends even to our attitude toward the church's budget. Our prayers should regularly be thanking God that he has given us *exactly what we need*.

Conclusion

My feeling of shock because of the taxes on my first paycheck was not the only feeling I had in that moment. There was the quick resolution that there was nothing I could do about it. So long as I was a citizen of this nation, I had to pay those taxes. As citizens of God's kingdom, we are to be *willingly* generous. We desire to grow and excel in our generosity because when our master, Jesus Christ, returns, we long to hear “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master” (Mt. 25:21).

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is tithing (10%) the standard for generosity? Why or why not?

The New Testament standard for generosity is *sacrificial* giving. We no longer live under the Old Covenant. We find no command in the New Testament that as Christians we must tithe as we find in the Old Covenant (see Lev. 27:30). We are now under the law of Christ in the New Covenant because Jesus has fulfilled the “Law and Prophets” (Mt. 5:17-20). However, keep in mind that Jesus tended to amplify Old Testament commands. Where Israel was told not to commit adultery, Jesus clarified that a man is not to even look lustfully at a woman. In the New Testament we are called to sacrificial giving. (see Mk. 12:41-44; Lk. 21:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9).

Practically speaking, however, tithing may be a helpful place to start with sacrificial giving. If a newly married couple were seeking financial advice for setting a family budget, 10% of their gross income is a good place for them to start. Yet for others who are strapped with debt it may be 5%. For someone better off financially, 15% or even 25% may be an appropriate place to start. Every person and financial situation is different. The *standard* is sacrificial giving and that is going to vary from person to person.

2. How should I think about my giving to the local church versus parachurch ministries that are doing gospel ministry?

The local church is God's design and intended means for the spread of the gospel. It's clear that the early Christians were called to give for the good of the saints and building up of other local churches (Acts 2:42-44; 4:32-37; 16:15; Rom. 16:25-28; 2 Cor. 8-9; Gal. 6:6-10; Phil. 2:25-30, 4:14-20; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; Titus 3:14; Heb. 13:16; 1 Pet. 4:10; 3 Jn. 5-8). Thus, the majority of our sacrificial giving should be directed to the local church that has taken specific responsibility for the well-being of our soul and for strategizing how to reach the nations with the gospel.

However, there is much good gospel ministry being done throughout the world by parachurch ministries that needs funding. So here are some questions to help you think through giving to parachurch ministries:

- a. Are you sacrificially giving first to your church?
- b. Do you have the funds to give to additional ministries or would you be placing a financial burden on yourself and/or your family?
- c. Do the ministries have a good commitment and partnership with local churches or do they see themselves as "in competition" with churches?
- d. Do you have a personal relationship or experience with the ministry?
- e. Do you regularly evaluate their work?

3. What should I do if I am unable to give generously because of previously poor financial decisions?

Giving generously for a Christian is a matter of the heart and priorities. Most struggle to give because they have never made it a priority—they unconsciously commit 10-30% to the government in taxes without a blink but struggle to commit accordingly to God. However, it is possible to make a financial change.

First, you should seek counsel and accountability if needed. Second, you should examine your current discretionary spending and be willing to make hard decisions about spending less (again, counsel from others may be needed.). Third, you should commit to sacrificially increase your giving with a portion from every increase in income or reduction in expenses.

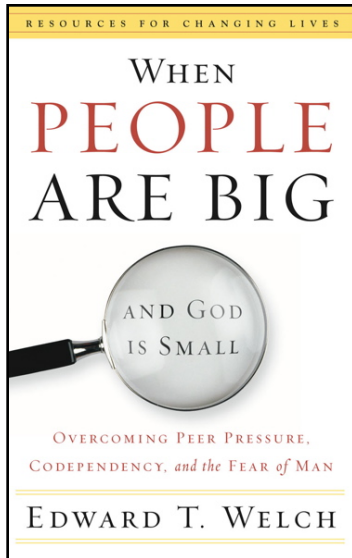
4. Given the abundant wealth in America and the lure of materialism, what are some ways I can practically instruct my kids in having a spirit of generosity?

First and foremost by setting an example—by explaining when a family's discretionary expense or activity is forgone in order to make a gift, by teaching them what Scripture says about sacrificial giving, and by encouraging/teaching them to give sacrificially whenever they "earn" some money. Like other attributes we desire for our children, we will not likely see what we do not display ourselves.

5. How should I think about generosity when I have a fixed income as a retiree?

A Christian at any point in life is not to live in fear, for God promises to provide what we need (Mt. 6:25-34). For those no longer being compensated for their work, their focus must be on what they can control—their expenses and lifestyle. God is not concerned with the dollar amount that we give but whether we give sacrificially from what we have. A Christian does not retire from giving, just as they do not retire from serving.

-- Brad Thayer



Book Review

When People Are Big and God Is Small: Overcoming Peer Pressure, Codependency, and Fear of Man

By Edward T. Welch
Reviewed by Frank Louthan

Chariots of Fire, the 1981 Academy Award-winning Picture of the Year, portrays events leading up to and during the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris with focus on the outstanding performances of certain British runners. Particular attention is given to two gold medalists: Eric Liddell (who set an Olympic record in the 400 meters) and Harold Abrahams (100 meters). The viewer cannot avoid the contrast between these two men. Liddell was a Scot with natural talent; he was unorthodox in his training and running form, but gifted with great speed and heart. Abrahams pursued English manners and education and was driven by a desire to excel above others. To this end he employed the best coaching and technique.

There are two memorable scenes in the movie, however, that reveal a more profound difference in these men. In one, Abrahams sits in an empty sports stadium, dejected and disconsolate after having lost to Liddell in a 100 meters race. Though he performed well, Abrahams could not seem to overcome his personal sense of unworthiness. The other scene is of Liddell in the hills above Edinburgh telling his sister that the Lord had made him fast, and he felt His pleasure when he ran. Liddell's life decisions were made according to his understanding of God's will. Abrahams, on the other hand, was controlled by how he compared

himself to other men. This latter condition is called "needing people" by Edward T. Welch, Ph.D, in his book *When People Are Big and God is Small: Overcoming Peer Pressure, Codependency, and the Fear of Man* (hereby WPAB.)

Author and Purpose

Welch is a member of the faculty and a counselor in the School of Biblical Counseling at the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (an organization linked with Westminster Theological Seminary.) The School's mission is "Restoring Christ to Counseling and Counseling to the Church," and, as its name implies, teaches and practices Biblical Counseling,¹ being "committed to the complete trustworthiness and primacy of the Scriptures" (for a history of Biblical Counseling and the theological position of CCEF, visit <http://www.ccef.org/about/ccef-history-foundation-model>).

WPAB was written to illustrate, through examples from both scripture and contemporary life, that many forms of "fear of man" are prevalent in today's society, and these fears need to be exposed, understood, and replaced with a proper fear of the Lord. Through this process, Welch explains, we will learn to "need people less and to love people more" (18).

Introduction and Overview

Not having a counseling background, the terms "fear of man" and "needing people" were unfamiliar to me. Furthermore, Welch begins WPAB with a testimonial about his teenage reluctance to be in the

¹ In the practice of Christian psychological counseling, there are said to be five "approaches" regarding the application of modern (secular) psychology, with "Biblical" being one of the five. For additional information on the differences between the approaches see Greggo, Stephen and Sisemore, Timothy, *Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012).

limelight coupled, strangely, with a need for recognition. He subsequently developed a dependency on or “need for” receiving love from his wife. When first reading the introduction, I did not identify with such “needs.” However, upon reading Welch’s broader explanation of how “needing people” was a form of “fear of man,” I came to realize I too have had similar needs in my life.

As a child much of my self-motivation came from a desire not to be outdone by others, whether in the grades I made at school or my ability on the athletic field. As a young adult my motivation migrated into not wanting to work for anyone younger than myself and to earn as much or more income as my peers. Your personal story may differ from mine or that of the more than a dozen others presented in *WPAB*, and you might even ask what is so bad about having such motivations? *WPAB* explains that some motivations are as a result of the needs/fears that lie behind them, and offers biblically sound instruction on how to replace them with motivations based on the Lord’s will for your life.

Those who think through problems and solutions linearly will appreciate Welch’s two-part, methodical approach. In Part 1, he identifies why and in what ways we fear others, including how to recognize our fear of man and how these fears may have become intensified over the course of our lives. In Part 2, he offers four steps to overcoming our needs/fears.

While fears such as those of physical harm from evil people are quite proper, Part 1 of *WPAB* directs our focus to the needing/fearing of other people that occurs when we are controlled by what we think other people might be thinking about us. In other words, our attitudes and behavior can be controlled by comparing ourselves to others, resulting in wanting (needing) their love, respect, or admiration. Symptoms could be second-guessing ourselves because of others’ opinions, being constantly afraid of failure, not wanting to appear stupid or foolish, looking to others for clues as to how we should behave, being easily embarrassed, telling “white lies” or exaggerating, or having jealousy of others. As Welch says, we must recognize these signs and admit that other people may have become our “idol of choice,” meaning we have made people more important or greater than God.

The steps for overcoming needs/fears, found in Part 2, forms the major portion of *WPAB*. Here Welch carefully explains (1) how we have developed wrong thinking about overcoming needs/fears, (2) how to develop a proper fear of the Lord, and (3) how to replace needs/fears with love. To showcase some of Welch’s insights, we will take a quick look at portions of the discussion of each of these three topics.

Has Christian Counseling Misdirected Us?

In his *Systematic Theology*, Wayne Grudem discusses the different views held by biblical scholars about whether the human being consists of three distinct parts (body, soul, and spirit) or two parts (body and spirit). Grudem believes, and Welch concurs, that in the New Testament the terms ‘soul’ and ‘spirit’ are used interchangeably to describe one, non-material part of the human being (*Systematic Theology*, 472-489). This distinctive comes front-and-center in Welch’s discussion of how Christians are to deal with their “needs.”

In chapter 8 of *WPAB*, entitled “Biblically Examine Your Felt Needs,” Welch states that some counselors explain to their patients how a person, along with their bodily and spiritual needs, must also have their psychological “needs” (meaning needs which arise in their soul) met or supplied. He points out that some Christian counselors go on to say that all of our needs, including the ones that are psychological, will be met by Christ. Welch, himself a neuropsychologist and a Christian counselor, states that such counseling about psychological needs is incorrect.

Holding to the two-part view of human beings, Welch questions if psychological issues should be termed “needs.” He believes scripture clearly states that all our bodily and spiritual needs will be supplied, but scripture does not elevate psychological *desires* to the level of God-given *needs* that are promised to be supplied. Instead, Welch says, the cause of psychological desires is sin. In one of the strongest statements in *WPAB*, he says, “To look to Christ to meet our perceived psychological needs is to Christianize our lusts. We are asking God to give us what we want, so we can feel better

about ourselves, or so we can have more happiness, not holiness, in our lives” (150).

Liberation from Fear of Man

A central theme of *WPAB* is that our fear of man must be replaced with a proper fear of the Lord (19). But how is that accomplished when, as Welch points out, we live in the context of a contemporary culture whose worldview is devoid of biblical thinking and more value is placed on individual possibilities than on submission to authority (76)?

In answer, *WPAB* not only gives a thorough list of scriptures extolling the fear of the Lord, but Welch also reminds us that hell is real, we need to be in awe of God and His gloriousness, we need to overcome our reluctance to obedience, and we should be amazed at the miracles. A most interesting suggestion is offered: read God’s longest speech in the Bible – the final four chapters of Job – for thirty days in a row (115).

Loving People More

Having remedied the need/fear of man with the fear of the Lord, Welch turns to the goal of loving people more, beginning with a discussion of being created in the “image of God.” He states we are most in that image when we are “loving [God] and loving our neighbor,” when God is the object of our worship and delight and other people are the object of our *agape* (158).

Scripture provides instruction on loving three classes of people: enemies, non-enemies (neighbors and foreigners), and brothers and sisters in Christ. Loving our enemies is difficult; Welch says it is “the pinnacle of Christian obedience to God,” (190) not to be done with improper motivations. But it is on loving our brothers and sisters, the “ones with whom we share partnership in being Christ to the world,” that Welch chooses to place his greatest emphasis. He explains that many of Paul’s instructions to the churches cannot be successfully accomplished by an individual member of the body of Christ, but only by groups working together, much as a family is supposed to work together. With clear, convicting focus he says, “When we live in the fear of the Lord, there is an intensity to our lives. We are zealous to obey, we are no longer indifferent to others, and we

have a *desire for the church to be brilliant and outstanding*” (214, emphasis added).

Conclusion

Welch concludes *WPAB* by recounting a day when he was, in his eyes, unsuccessful at his work of lecturing to a class of students. And perhaps you know that Eric Liddell’s life ended when, as a missionary, he was imprisoned in China. But both men knew that to compare their condition to a “more successful” person or to take pity on themselves and want others to “appreciate” them more would divert their awareness away from the truth that God loved them. They did not need approval of men; instead they feared God and knew His love.

Knowing & Being Known

SCHEDULE HIGHLIGHTS

CHURCH-WIDE

Tuesday, January 7 7:00 pm Reception for Hall's
All are invited to a reception to honor and show our appreciation for the 5 years of service Jacob and Jane Hall have given to the youth and church. Contact [Alison Lawson](#) if you are help to bring a dessert or setup/cleanup.

Wednesday, January 8 5:00 pm Wednesday Night Resumes
Our Wednesday night dinner and Bible studies for all ages resume. New Equipping Matters classes include Guidance and Financial Stewardship.

Sunday, January 12 9:15 am, 12:15 pm Knowing MVBC
Guests and members are invited to attend our membership class called *Knowing MVBC*. In this 4-part class, you will learn about our Covenant, Statement of Faith, leadership, and how to be involved. Lunch is included, and childcare is available if needed. RSVP [Brad Thayer](#).

Monday, January 20 All Day Office Closed—MLK Day
The office will be closed all day in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Sunday, January 26 4:30 pm Church in Conference
All members are invited to our regular Church in Conference as we'll consider many matters related to the life of the church.

ADULTS

Monday, January 27 12:00 pm RW&A Luncheon
Everyone ages 50 and older are invited to a time of food and fellowship. Please bring one side dish.

WOMEN

Wednesday, January 8 9:30 am Precept Bible Study
The women's *Precept* Bible study resumes. All women are invited. To sign up or for more details, contact [Sylvia Hennessy](#).

Wednesday, January 22 9:30 am Amazing Collection Bible Study
The women's *Amazing Collection* Bible study resumes. All women are invited. To sign up or for more details, contact [Evelyn Norwood](#).

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Friday, January 17 6:30 pm Youth Friday Night Fellowship
All youth are invited for a night of fun and fellowship with other youth and family. Contact [Doug Young](#) for details about location.

Saturday, January 18 11:00 am Elementary Bowling
All elementary and their families are invited to a day of fun and bowling. Contact [Doug Young](#) for details.

BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Bob Neal
- 2 Bernie Davis
- 3 Gery Groslimond
Doug Stanfield
- 5 Bill Timmons
Marian Spiceland
- 7 Devra Brown
- 9 Julie Lester
- 13 Donna Clark
- 16 Chris Foy
- 17 Leyna Vaughtner
- 18 Priscilla Barry
- 20 Aaron Belt
- 22 Bryan Pillsbury
Kyle Harris Timmons
- 23 Ron Kath
- 27 Guerda Sajous
Clifford Collins
- 28 Laura Thompson
- 30 Candace Thayer
- 31 Mikell Mitchell



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