

PERSPECTIVE

APRIL 2023

A series of stylized, overlapping blue waves with fine horizontal lines, filling the middle section of the cover.

Baptism *for* Baptists

CONTENTS



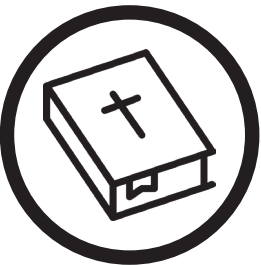
ARTICLE	1
<i>Baptism for Baptists</i>	
Jeffrey Timmons	



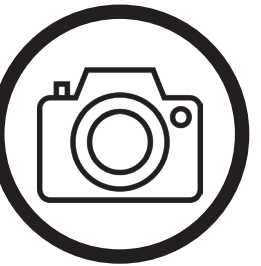
BOOK HIGHLIGHT	5
<i>Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice</i>	
Written by Bryan Chapell	
Recommended by Kalep Kanode	



BOOK HIGHLIGHT	6
<i>Praying in Public: A Guidebook for Prayer in Corporate Worship</i>	
Written by Pat Quinn	
Recommended by Ashley Cochran	



BIBLE READING PLAN	7
<i>Take Up & Read</i>	
April	



NEW MEMBERS	8
<i>Lisa Anderson, Michael Bullock, Brad & Casey Cone, Sam & Rachel Edwards, Eilene Epperson, Hannah Lupas, Alex Ragan, Derik Rogers, Steven & Margie Still</i>	

Baptism for Baptists

At Mount Vernon Baptist Church, we love being Baptists. We love it so much that it's in our name. We talk a lot about what the church is according to the Bible. And even if we can't quite articulate it, we know deep down that being Baptist must be significant. But what exactly does baptism signify? Is baptism something an *individual* does or something the *church* does? Is it both? What follows is an FAQ on baptism for Baptists. Maybe you are a Baptist who has never thought much about baptism. Then, this article is for you!

1. WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Bobby Jamieson provides a helpful definition in his succinct booklet on baptism. "Baptism is a church's act of affirming and portraying a believer's union with Christ by immersing him or her in water, and a believer's act of publicly committing him or herself to Christ and his people, thereby uniting a believer to the church and marking off him or her from the world."ⁱ

2. WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

The first individuals baptized in the book of Acts did so after hearing the gospel from Peter. Convicted of their sin, the crowd asked Peter what they should do. Peter told them, "*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins . . .*" (Acts 2:38). Luke records a few verses later, "*So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls*" (2:41).

Acts 2 teaches several things:

- First, baptism is reserved and required for those who publicly turn from their sin and trust in Christ (2:38).
- Second, this profession of faith in Christ must accord with apostolic teaching (2:37).
- Third, new Christians commit themselves to other Christians by being added to the church membership through baptism (2:41).
- Fourth, that baptism publicly marks them off from the onlooking world (2:13, 40).

3. WHAT'S THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH IN BAPTISM?

While baptism is an individual's act (see above), it is also a church's act. In Matthew 16:19, Jesus authorizes the apostles to make binding decisions that reflect Jesus' prior judgment concerning professions of faith. In 18:18, Jesus gives that same authority to local churches, "*Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*"

What's going on here? By telling churches to bind on

earth what is bound in heaven, Jesus gave local churches the authority to affirm an individual's profession of faith as it accords with the gospel. Thus, in Matthew 28, when Jesus authorizes his apostles to make new disciples and gather them into churches, he is also authorizing local churches to do the same, "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . .*" (28:19). Robust congregational singing displays unity in the body. It is the biblical, gospel-centered content of our songs that unifies us, but it is our singing that shows or showcases that unity. Men and women should join with full voice as we sing to God and one another. The way we sing communicates to others; it embodies the truth of the songs.ⁱⁱ

In summary, local churches are entrusted with Jesus' authority to affirm genuine professions of faith by adding new members into their fold through baptism.

4. WHERE SHOULD BAPTISMS OCCUR?

The physical location of baptism is not particularly important. If a church has a baptistry, that's a convenient location. If a church doesn't, they must look for an alternate location with sufficient water nearby. However, the imperative factor is that since baptisms are a church's act, the entire church should be invited to gather to witness the baptism. Therefore, having baptisms as part of a regular church gathering is ideal.

5. WHAT'S THE CONNECTION BETWEEN BAPTISM AND CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

For brand-new Christians like those in Acts 2 who responded to Peter's preaching, baptism is the entry point of membership into a local church. Baptism in and of itself is the sign that a church affirms the new Christian's profession of faith. The church baptizes the individual *and* brings him or her into their fold. Baptizing the individual *is* bringing him or her into the fold. Baptism is also the public demonstration that a believer is committing himself to that local church. Baptism, therefore, should not be severed from church membership. Remember, this is for brand-new Christians. Since one should only be baptized once, not all new members are baptized into church membership.

6. WHY ARE TESTIMONIES SHARED IN ADVANCE OF BAPTISMS AT MOUNT VERNON?

The members of the local church together (and not its elders or deacons) are entrusted with authority over the church's membership. At Mount Vernon, we think it is prudent for new members about to be baptized to share their testimonies with the church. The church is entrusted with guarding the membership of the church by making sure that every member gets the gospel right and

displays a life transformed by the gospel. For this reason, the testimonies of new members are summarized at our Church-In-Conference and then personally shared when a candidate for membership is about to be baptized.

7. AT WHAT POINT DOES A NEW MEMBER JOINING THROUGH BAPTISM BECOME A MEMBER OF MOUNT VERNON?

Because baptism is the entry point into membership in a local church, it is when the individual is baptized at our gathering that they become a member. Because of this, some individuals aren't yet members even after the congregation has approved them at a Church-In-Conference. Those members are approved for membership *pending baptism*. The moment the baptism happens, they become members.

8. DOES A PASTOR HAVE TO BAPTIZE, AND IF NOT, WHY IS AARON THE ONLY ONE WHO DOES IT?

Because baptism is a church's act, it is not necessary for Aaron or, for that matter, any other elder to be the one who baptizes. Someone must act on the church's behalf in baptism by performing the baptism. Because elders are set aside for the ministry of the word and conduct membership interviews with potential new members, they serve as the first filter in determining whether an individual understands and believes the gospel and demonstrates by their life that they have been changed by it. Therefore, it is fitting, but not required, for an elder to baptize.

9. WHY IS BAPTISM A PREREQUISITE TO TAKING THE LORD'S SUPPER?

Baptism is the entry point into church membership. When a church baptizes someone, they affirm, to the best of their knowledge, that this person is a Christian and a member of the new covenant. At the cross, Jesus became the atonement that satisfies God's wrath for those who embrace him by faith. God credits Jesus' righteousness to the one who trusts in him. The Lord's Supper is the ongoing means by which a local church ratifies the new covenant together. By partaking of the bread and wine that symbolize Jesus' broken body and shed blood in their place, a local church formally continues its affirmation that the members of that church are making a true profession of faith in Christ crucified for them.

10. DO BAPTISM AND CIRCUMCISION CORRESPOND?

Not exactly. Our Presbyterian friends, as well as other Christians who argue it is appropriate to baptize babies, insist that the baptism of infants in Christian homes today corresponds to the circumcision of infants in Jewish homes in the times of the Old Testament. They argue that just as circumcision in the Old Testament was

a sign of belonging to the people of God, so baptism now signifies some kind of membership in the New Covenant community.

However, remember that Israel was comprised of both believers and unbelievers. Because circumcision involved the cutting off of the skin, the act of circumcision symbolized the threat of being cut off from the people of Israel for disobedience (Gen. 17:14). Circumcision also served as a reminder for Israel to circumcise their hearts (Deut. 10:16) "so that their lives matched their status as God's covenant people." However, many Jewish people under the Old Covenant had neither faith in God nor faithfulness to God. Yet, they remained God's Old Covenant people.

We believe baptism now corresponds to the circumcision of the heart and testifies to the fact that God himself has circumcised our hearts (Col 2:11-13) by granting us to trust that Jesus was cut off for us.ⁱⁱⁱ Thus, we expect every baptized member of a local church to be a Christian who bears spiritual fruit.

11. IS BAPTISM THE MARKER OF ENTRY INTO THE NEW COVENANT?

No.

Faith in the gospel is the marker of entry into the New Covenant.

12. HOW DOES BAPTISM RELATE TO THE NEW COVENANT?

While baptism is not the marker of entry into the New Covenant, it is the sign publicly portraying that we have become partakers of it. Bobby Jamieson describes how baptism is an "oath-sign" of this New Covenant:

[Baptism] is the act that publicly enacts one's promise to trust in Christ and live out the new covenant. . . All covenants are ratified by an oath: a solemn, self-obligating promise. . . The old covenant had circumcision, an oath-sign which ratified an individual's entrance into the covenant. So also, the new covenant comes with an oath-sign—actually, two of them. The first, baptism, is its initiating oath-sign. It is a solemn, symbolic vow that ratifies one's entrance into the new covenant. In baptism, we appeal to God to accept us on the terms of his new covenant (1 Pet 3:21), and we pledge ourselves to fulfill, by grace, all that his new covenant requires of us (Mart. 28:19). In baptism, we swear the vow, "Do you taken this Jesus to be your Lord and Savior?" "I do."^{iv}

13. WHAT DOES BAPTISM SIGNIFY?

Baptism is a public profession of repentance and faith in Christ that signifies five things in the life of the one being baptized. Baptism signifies (1) forgiveness and cleansing and (2) the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter tells those convicted of their sin and trusting Christ, *“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 2:38). (3) Baptism also depicts a Christian’s union with Christ and (4) new life in Christ, *“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life”* (Rom 6:4). Finally, baptism also signifies (5) the dawning new creation that has become ours through union with Christ, *“For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his”* (Rom 6:5, cf. 8-10).^v

14. WHY IS WATER USED IN BAPTISM?

The symbolic value of water in the Old Testament captures many of the symbolic elements of baptism from the previous answer. For example, water was used in the Old Testament for cleansing.^{vi} The Holy Spirit was predicted to be poured out on God’s people (Isa. 44:3). Notice also how God separated the waters from the waters to form dry land not only at creation (Gen 1:9-10) but also after Noah’s flood (Gen. 8). During the Exodus, God again divided the waters and brought his redeemed people safely through as an act of mini- “new creation” (Exod. 14). Water in baptism unites these elements: cleansing, the gift of the Holy Spirit, new life, and redemption as a new creation.

15. WHY DID JOHN THE BAPTIST BAPTIZE?

Just as Israel originally entered the land of Canaan by exiting Egypt and passing through the sea, so John used the powerful imagery of the Old Testament to call the Israel of his day to leave “Egypt” and re-enter the land after passing through the waters and confessing their sins (Mark 1:4–5). This statement was provocative. John essentially told his countrymen, “Israel has become apostate. Therefore, to prepare for the arrival of the kingdom of God, acknowledge that you are sinful rebels (like Egypt of old) by leaving the land, confessing your sin, and re-entering by passing through the waters again. It’s time to leave Egypt and enter the promised land.”

16. WHY WAS JESUS BAPTIZED BY JOHN?

Jesus, having no sin to confess, was baptized by John (Mark 1:9) probably to identify with those who confessed their sin and recognized, by exiting the land, that they needed to be part of a “new Israel.” This new people of God would be distinct from the inhabitants of the land

of Palestine. Remember, for too long, the people of Israel failed to live up to God’s commandments, which is why they needed the gospel!

The Holy Spirit’s subsequent descent upon Jesus marked him out as the “new Israel” (cf. Hos. 7:11). It was a way of showing that in Christ, a new people would be able to live up to God’s commands. Thus, Jesus—emerging from the water—began to enact the ministry of redemption that John only announced (Mark 1:10; Isa. 64:1).^{vii}

17. WHAT IS JESUS’ BAPTISM IN MARK 10:38?

Jesus’ baptism is his suffering or immersion into God’s wrath for his elect at the cross.

18. DOES SOMEONE NEED TO BE BAPTIZED TO BE SAVED?

Baptism does not save. However, as Christians obey *all* that Jesus commands (Matt 28:19–20; John 14:15), they also obey the command to be baptized. Baptism is thus one of the first commands for new Christians to follow.

19. WHY DOES SCRIPTURE SPEAK OF BAPTISM AS SAVING (1 PET 3:21)?

In what sense does baptism “save” according to 1 Peter 3:21: *“Baptism, which corresponds to this [Noah’s flood], now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Christ”*? First, baptism’s saving efficacy is not taught in this verse. Instead, Peter qualifies baptism’s saving efficacy, not by external washing (*“not as a removal of dirt from the body”*) “but the internal appeal to God which mediates salvation.”^{viii} Furthermore, the power that brings salvation in baptism is the resurrection of Jesus. More importantly, this verse is one of several in the New Testament that, while not denying that conversion takes place in a single moment in time, often describe becoming a Christian as an entire package: repentance, faith, confession, regeneration, gift of the Holy Spirit, and baptism.^{ix}

20. WHY DOES MOUNT VERNON DELAY BAPTISM FOR CHILDREN?

When Jesus teaches that the kingdom must be received like little children (Mark 10:15), he illustrates the impossibility of reconciliation with God outside of simply receiving mercy as a gift. As children (typically) unquestioningly accept what their parents tell them, so Christians unswervingly trust God’s provision in Christ. Because children, by and large, believe what their parents tell them, Mount Vernon has found it prudent to delay baptism until a child who professes faith arrives at his or her later years of high school. This deferment is because

one who is baptized needs to make a credible profession of faith and be ready to engage in all the duties of church membership. This stance does not mean that the elders at Mount Vernon think children can't be Christians. Not at all! Instead, they simply believe it's difficult to distinguish a child's genuine profession of faith from another child's non-genuine one. Therefore, they have found it prudent to wait a few more years. Nevertheless, they would love to send high schoolers off to college, having experienced the duties and joys of church membership.

21. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IMMERSION, SPRINKLING, AND POURING?

Non-Baptist churches often practice baptism by either sprinkling or pouring. This practice is inappropriate for a few reasons. First, the imagery of passing through water from the Old Testament is lost. Second, the Greek verb translated in English as "to baptize" means "to immerse." The first-century Jewish historian Josephus uses this word to describe ships sinking (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 9:212), and the Greek revision of the Old Testament uses this word for water that sweeps over someone (Psa. 69:2, Symmachus Psa. 68:3).

22. DOES MY BAPTISM COUNT IF . . .

. . . THE PASTOR WHO BAPTIZED ME IS NO LONGER A CHRISTIAN?

. . . THE CHURCH IN WHICH I WAS BAPTIZED DID NOT PREACH THE GOSPEL?

. . . I WAS NOT A CHRISTIAN WHEN I WAS BAPTIZED?

Because baptism is an act of a church, it is sad but does not disqualify the validity of one's baptism if the person who baptized you no longer professes faith in Christ. However, the church that baptized you must have been right on the gospel for it to have been a true church. That means that a baptism in a Roman Catholic Church (denying justification by faith alone) or a Oneness Pentecostal church (denying the Trinity) isn't a baptism at all. Only true churches carry the authority of conferring baptism, which Jesus delegates.

Because baptism requires faith in the gospel to be a genuine baptism, if you know that you were not baptized as a believer, the previous baptism was, in fact, not a baptism. In such a circumstance, you should be baptized for the first time. However, if you made a sincere profession of faith before your baptism but are now uncertain as to whether you were truly converted when you were baptized, this is the advice I would give you. It's better not to be baptized again unless you are sure you were not a Christian when you previously "got wet."^x

CONCLUSION

I'm thankful to be a part of a Baptist church, not because I think baptism is the most significant doctrine, but because I believe how we baptize here at Mount Vernon is in accord with what the Bible teaches about baptism. The next time we have a baptism on a Sunday morning, remember just how kind God has been to reveal to us how we are to make our faith public. Please go out of your way to encourage the person being baptized and thank God for his or her testimony. We all have friends and probably family who aren't Baptist. We can be kind and gracious and recognize Christians disagree on this topic. But we can also hold our view firmly since God has spoken.

— Jeffrey Timmons

ⁱ Bobby Jamieson, *Understanding Baptism*, (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2016), 6.

ⁱⁱ Bobby Jamieson, *Going Public: Why Baptism is Required for Church Membership*, (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2015), 87-88.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bobby Jamieson, *Going Public: Why Baptism is Required for Church Membership*, (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2015), 73-74.

^{iv} Bobby Jamieson, *Understanding Baptism*, (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2016), 45.

^v Bobby Jamieson, *Going Public: Why Baptism is Required for Church Membership*, (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2015), 44-49.

^{vi} E.g., Exod. 30:17-21, Bobby Jamieson, *Going Public: Why Baptism is Required for Church Membership*, (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2015), 46.

^{vii} Rikk Watts, "Mark," in *Commentary on the New Testament: Use of the Old Testament*, eds. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007), 120-22.

^{viii} Bobby Jamieson, *Going Public: Why Baptism is Required for Church Membership*, (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2015), 39.

^{ix} Bobby Jamieson, *Going Public: Why Baptism is Required for Church Membership*, (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2015), 38-40.

^x For more on this topic, see: Bobby Jamieson. "You Asked: Should I Get 'Re-Baptized'? (Credobaptist Answer)." *The Gospel Coalition*, 6 Feb. 2013, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/you-asked-should-i-get-re-baptized-credobaptist-answer/>. Accessed 23 Mar. 2023. Also, see: Nathan Finn. "A Baptist Perspective on 'Re-Baptism.'" *Nathan A. Finn*, 11 Feb. 2013, <https://www.nathanfinn.com/2013/02/11/a-baptist-perspective-on-re-baptism/>. Accessed 23 Mar. 2023.

Christ-Centered Worship

Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice

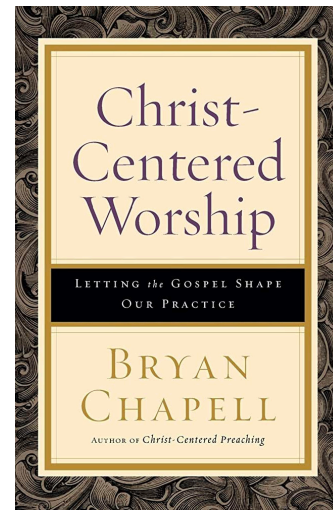
Written by Bryan Chapell

I often hear our Sunday morning gathering described as “*intentional*.” Members and visitors recognize that careful thought has gone into planning the church’s most important gathering. Intentionality is a good thing, but it begs a more profound question: About what exactly are we supposed to be intentional? More to the point, does the Bible and church history have anything to say about how Christians should organize and focus their main weekly gathering?

In *Christ-Centered Worship*, Bryan Chapell convincingly argues that the story of the Gospel must be what orders and shapes our worship. Chapell begins the book by maintaining that, contrary to what modern minds may think, our worship’s structure tells a story. It has a beginning and an end. It takes us somewhere. The various elements of the service teach us as they carry us along. He then demonstrates how, from the earliest eras of church history, the story told in true Christian worship is, in fact, the story of the gospel. From there, he concludes the book by considering each element of a gospel-shaped service and providing practical commentary.

Chapell’s book has two unique strengths. First is his commitment to not advance his personal preferences or agenda. Instead, he seeks to promote a biblical and historical vision for corporate worship not rooted in any particular tradition. This book transcends the petty preferential debates that often dominate discussions of corporate worship into the fresh air of gospel centrality and unity. The second main strength of the book lies in the practical value of Chapell’s chapters on each element of corporate worship. I highly recommend these chapters to pastors and members alike as an invaluable aid to understanding how each component of corporate worship contributes to a genuinely Christ-Centered worship gathering.

– Recommended by Kalep Kanode



Excerpts from the Book

1

“Liturgy tells a story. We tell the gospel by the way we worship.”

– “The Gospel of Structure,” p. 19

2

“Despite their obvious differences, all these Liturgies of the Word have a sequence in common: Adoration, Confession, Assurance, Thanksgiving, Petition, Instruction, Charge, and Blessing. But if we did not know this sequence was describing a liturgical pattern, we would probably think it was describing something else: the progress of the gospel in the life of an individual.”

– “The Gospel Story,” p. 99

3

“With a scriptural Call to Worship, God invites us by his Word to join the worship of the ages and angels. God does not simply invite us to a party of friends, or a lecture on religion, or a concert of sacred music—he invites us into the presence of the King of the Universe before whom all creation will bow and for whom all heaven now sings.”

– “Call to Worship,” p. 160

Praying in Public

A Guidebook for Prayer in Corporate Worship

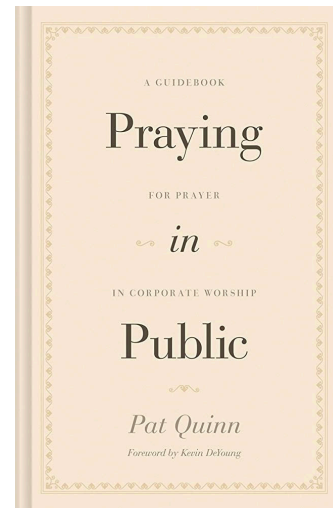
Written by Pat Quinn

As a church body, we have the privilege and command of encouraging and exhorting one another through corporate worship. Therefore, we ought to approach every element of our public gatherings with the humility and seriousness required when leading fellow brothers and sisters to a correct posture towards God, including our corporate prayers. In his book, *Praying in Public*, Pat Quinn uses biblical principles and historical examples of church liturgy to provide specific guidelines for corporate prayer to edify the church and give all glory to our triune God.

Quinn divides his book into two parts. In part one, Quinn outlines specific principles to guide you in composing your prayer. For example, many know the acronym “ACTS” (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication) as a helpful tool when approaching prayer. Quinn expounds on this model and reinforces the importance of including prayers of adoration (thanksgiving included), confession, and supplication in every service to ensure a balanced approach to our worship. Quinn also highlights the need for our public prayers to be saturated in scripture, either explicitly or thematically, to help us to pray according to God’s will. In addition, Quinn addresses the unfortunate trend within our current culture to approach corporate prayer casually. He challenges us to consider God’s holiness and love when focusing only on the latter is often the tendency.

In part two of the book, Quinn provides specific examples of prayers written and prayed in services he has led at his church. This section helps apply the principles discussed in part one of the book, and you could even use this section as a devotional. While the book primarily addresses important considerations when composing congregational prayers, anyone desiring to lead and pray well, whether in small groups, bible studies, family, devotionals, or even in your personal prayer time, would benefit from reading this book.

– Recommended by Ashley Cochran



Excerpts from the Book

1

“Since the Bible is God-inspired and infallibly guides us into all that is good, true, and beautiful, our public prayers should be saturated with Scripture.”

– “Bible Saturated Prayer,” p. 38

2

“No matter the blessings and privileges of gospel sonship—and they are immeasurably great (Eph. 2:7)—congregational prayer should still lead us to trembling joy in the presence of our God of holy love.”

– “Thoughtful and Reverent Prayer,” p. 52

3

“It would obviously be incompatible with the gospel to try to impress people with our verbal skill or rhetorical power in prayer. Instead, we aim at words that are fluent rather than halting, graceful rather than flowery, clear rather than confusing, and striking rather than trite. Our prayers should flow from and point to God as the source and sum of all that is good, true, and beautiful. This is a high goal but well worth our best efforts.”

– “Well-Prepared Prayer,” p. 69

APRIL

These Scripture readings have been selected to help you prepare for the Sunday morning message. Take Up & Read!

April 1	Romans 11:11–24	April 17	Romans 4:13–25
April 2	Romans 4:1–12	April 18	Romans 11:25–36
April 3	Mark 16:1–8	April 19	Romans 12:1–2
April 4	Matthew 28:1–8	April 20	Romans 12:3–8
April 5	Luke 24:1–35	April 21	Genesis 17:1–8
April 6	Luke 24:36–53	April 22	Romans 12:9–13
April 7	1 Cor. 15:1–11	April 23	Romans 4:13–25
April 8	Psalms 16	April 24	Romans 5:1–11
April 9	Mark 16:1–8	April 25	Romans 12:14–21
April 10	Habakkuk 3:17–19	April 26	Romans 13:1–7
April 11	Philippians 4:2–9	April 27	Romans 13:8–10
April 12	Job 1	April 28	Job 1:6–22
April 13	Job 13	April 29	Romans 13:11–14
April 14	John 16:25–33	April 30	Romans 5:1–11
April 15	Psalms 18		
April 16	Habakkuk 3:17–19		

*Sermons in bold

TAKE UP & READ

NEW MEMBERS



**Lisa
Anderson**



**Michael
Bullock**



**Brad
Cone**



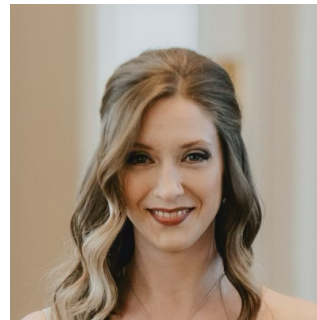
**Casey
Cone**



**Sam
Edwards**



**Rachel
Edwards**



**Eilene
Epperson**



**Hannah
Lupas**



**Alex
Ragan**



**Derik
Rogers**



**Steven
Still**



**Margie
Still**



Mount Vernon
BAPTIST CHURCH