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Issue 9

Perspective

the journal of mount
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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.

SERMON SCHEDULE

September 7

TBA

Guest Preacher: Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

September 14

From Rags to Riches

Daniel 1-2:49

September 21

Some Dreams Do Come True

Daniel 3:1-4:37

September 28

Same Old Story

Daniel 5:1-31

For a full list of past sermons,
visit www.mvbchurch.org.

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FIGHTER VERSE

Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.’

Isaiah 46:9-10 (ESV)

That the Next Generation Might Know Him

Aaron Menikoff

RECENTLY AN INTERESTING question showed up on the Q&A website, Quora: “Why do some people not want children?” You probably know a lot of people who have children, and many more who don’t yet have kids, but would really like some. Most of us have probably met young couples who are eager to be parents but, for various reasons, can’t get pregnant. But have you met a couple who are able to have children but are closed to the idea of being parents? One such husband went to Quora with an answer to the question. Here is what he said:

Speaking only for myself and my wife – we don’t like children. Not even slightly. We do not like being around them, don’t think they are cute. Neither of us wish to give up our lives to be responsible for another human that is not us and will suck our money, time and energy away for a minimum of two decades.

Both of us are skeeved by the very idea of being pregnant, neither of us has an ounce of maternal instinct. There are plenty of children in the world, it doesn’t need mine. Neither of us has amazing DNA the world needs . . .

We do not begrudge the joy of children to other people. We’re just not interested in having or being near them ourselves. In fact, we are continually thankful that we do not have children.

Let’s give this man credit for being clear! But consider how different was Jesus’ approach to kids:

Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it” (Luke 18:15-17).

Jesus never married. He never had kids of his own. But he loved children. As the one by whom, through whom, and for whom all things were created (Col 1:16) he must have delighted simply to look at and touch these ones so fearfully and wonderfully made (Ps 139:14).

I think there is more going on in Luke 18:15-17 than Jesus simply enjoying kids. It’s clear in his last sentence, “whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” Children are walking parables of faith. When a parent holds out his hand, his son or daughter instinctively grabs it. When a parent tells a child that the moon is made of cheese, Santa Claus is coming down the chimney, or the Easter Bunny is around the corner, a child naturally believes. This does not mean that parents should lie to their kids! But it does mean that there is something sweet about the way children are prone to trust. Jesus’ point is simple: all of us should have child-like faith in God. Commentator Walter Liefeld put it well, “It is not age per se that is in view but childlike qualities such as trust, openness, and the absence of holier-than-thou attitudes.” In short, one reason that Jesus valued children is because they provide a living illustration of the kind of faith he expects in every disciple.

How sad that the husband and wife I mentioned earlier have no interest in even “being near” children. And how different our attitude as Christians should be to little ones—be they in our own families, neighborhood or church. Whether we have kids of our own or not, we should value kids. We should care for them and want to spend time with them. First, because they are made in God’s image. Second, because they can teach us about childlike trust. Third, because they need the gospel in order to receive everlasting life.

It’s this last point that I want to focus on. Our willingness to spend time with children should be rooted in our desire to see them hear clearly about and dive deeply into the gospel of Jesus Christ. As adults who know the Lord, part of our lives should be devoted to helping little ones

better understand the Good News that changed everything for us.

Consider Timothy. He became a Christian because his mother and grandmother took the time to pass along the faith that they had received. Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:5, “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.” What if Lois and Eunice had said, “We don’t like being around kids. Tell Timothy to play catch with his friends.” Timothy might not have heard the gospel! But instead they did more than provide him food, they gave him the gospel, and the Lord gave him life.

This is not my story. My grandmother had no faith. My mother has no faith (at least not yet). But, Lord willing, Timothy’s story will be experienced by my children. My oldest is 12. My youngest is 4. Right now, each of them professes faith in Christ. But time will tell. My job is not to save them. God saves. It is the job of me and my wife to pass along the truth about Jesus. We strive to do this as lovingly, carefully, fervently, and faithfully as we possibly can.

As a pastor, I have another responsibility. I’m called to help the church instruct the children entrusted to our care. That’s what this article is about. By reading this, I hope that you’ll be encouraged to serve the children at Mount Vernon. You’ll know how to pray for the teachers and volunteers who work with our kids every week. Or, even better, you’ll take advantage of opportunities to serve. More than anything, as you see kids walking by you on Sunday morning, I pray that you will realize that they need the gospel, and make it a priority to greet them with a smile and give them the kind of encouragement that only Christians know how to give.

The church typically has children for only an hour or two a week, but these are precious hours where those kids get to sing and talk and hear about the gospel. We should all want Mount Vernon to be a place where parents know how to raise their kids, and where teachers know how to partner with parents for the sake of their children.

This is why you are reading this article. If you didn’t care about getting involved you’d have stopped reading a couple paragraphs ago (unless you are really, really bored and have nothing else to do). So, for those of you who have gotten this far, I want you to understand that it is a privilege to be with and serve children in the church. It’s an honor to be asked to teach young ones. If you are already serving in children’s ministry, I pray that every day you show up to class, you’ll serve those kids as if they

were your very own. And, if you have never taught kids, I pray you’ll see this as a valuable ministry.

The British pastor, Charles Spurgeon, once said that he would rather have the title, “Sabbath School Teacher,” than hold a degree from the finest university. He put it this way:

I love to see persons of some standing in society take an interest in Sabbath-schools. One great fault in many of our churches is that the children are left for the young people to take care of; the older members, who have more wisdom, taking but very little notice of them; and very often, the wealthier members of the church stand aside as if the teaching of the poor were not (as indeed it is) the special business of the rich. I hope for the day when the mighty men of Israel shall be found helping in this great warfare against the enemy. In the United States, we have heard of presidents, judges, members of Congress, and persons in the highest positions, not condescending—for I scorn to use such a term—but honoring themselves by teaching little children in Sabbath-schools. I had rather receive the title of S.S.T. than M.A., B.A., or any other honor that ever was conferred by men.

If you are someone who doesn’t ever want to teach kids, would you reconsider? Sunday school teacher really is an honorable role to play. If you are already serving in children’s ministry, I want to encourage you to reflect not only on why you are doing what you are doing, but on what your heart attitude should be toward serving kids. What’s in your heart? There are seven questions that I’d like you to ask yourself as you prepare for a season in children’s ministry.

First, is the holiness of God in your heart?

A.W. Tozer in his book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, wrote, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” My friend, God is not like us. He is different. His ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts. He is holy and sovereign; we are sinful and finite. Our kids need to know that when we speak of God, we are not speaking about our crazy uncle, but the LORD before whom we must be in awe. Is the holiness of God in your heart?

Second, is the Bible in your heart?

Kevin DeYoung pointed out in his book, *Taking God At His Word*, that God’s Word says what is true. It demands

what is right. It provides what is good. You must believe that the Bible is the Word of God—that where the Bible speaks, God speaks. There is nothing more thrilling than studying God’s words. There are no boring Bible studies, only boring teachers. Don’t pit “fun” against “study.” Be so overwhelmed with the perfection of Scripture that you can’t wait to wash the children in the water of God’s Word. Is the Bible in your heart?

Third, is theology in your heart?

If you prize God’s Word, then you will care deeply about what it means. Children have questions about God. They are looking for answers. The most important answers to life are found in Scripture. As J. I. Packer put it, “Each book [of the Bible] proceeded from the same divine mind, so the teaching of the Bible’s sixty-six books will be complementary and self-consistent.” In other words, the Bible does not contradict itself. It presents a unified picture of who God is, who we are, and what we must do to be saved. Theology is simply our attempt to understand the meaning and application of the Word of God to everyday life. Is theology in your heart?

Fourth, is compassion for children in your heart?

David Kinnaman in his book, *You Lost Me*, explains why many young people leave the church when they become adults. He argues that too often the church is a mile wide and an inch deep. The church has failed to answer the tough questions children ask. The church has not been a place where it is safe for children to express their doubts. If you have compassion for children, you will be sensitive to their questions and their struggles. You will not make them feel silly or overly-intellectual for asking hard questions. You will do your best to answer them. You will say, “I don’t know,” when you don’t know the answer to their question, and come back with the best answer you know how to give. Is compassion for children in your heart?

Fifth, is a love for the family in your heart?

We are not just here for the kids; we are here for the parents, too. We have high expectations for our parents. We want them to know what’s going on in class. We want to know they are carrying on with Bible study at home. We want to encourage them when we see evidence of growth in their children’s lives. We want to inform them when we see problems brewing in their children’s hearts. We want to see them together, as a family, worshipping the Lord. And for the children who come to church without a mom or a dad, we want to adopt them into our

families with all the love and encouragement we can muster. Is a love for the family in your heart?

Sixth, is disciple-making in your heart?

Our goal as a church is to see disciples made. Our vision for our children is to see them become disciples of Christ. This will mean personal attention, real conversation, and serious prayer. It is tempting for churches to lose themselves in parties and concerts and retreats and forget that the most important thing we can do is strategize to see that our children are being personally touched by the gospel. This requires what Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, authors of *The Trellis and the Vine*, call a “ministry mind-shift.” We have to move away from thinking about running programs to building people; from running events to training people; from using people to growing people; from filling gaps to training new workers. If you are serving in children’s ministry—whether as a volunteer with the babies once every few weeks or someone teaching every Sunday morning—I hope you realize that you are not simply a cog in a machine. You are not simply filling a hole in children’s ministry, you are a Christian serving the Lord in a particular way for a particular season. I want to make sure that you are being invested in personally and growing in grace and truth yourself. After all, how much better will our children be served if their teachers are personally growing in a love for Jesus? And if you are growing in your love for the Lord, then you will want to see your kids changed as well. If you are being disciplined you will labor to see your kids become disciples as well. Is disciple-making in your heart?

Seventh, is the church in your heart?

Too many people today see the church as a nice addition to the car of the Christian life—leather interior—instead of the chassis itself. Kids leave the church because it seems irrelevant, broiled in controversy, and, most of all, unimportant to the people they look up to. If the church is unimportant to you, it will be unimportant to them. I love how Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck put it in their book, *Why We Love the Church?*

Church isn’t boring because we’re not showing enough film clips, or because we play an organ instead of a guitar. It’s boring because we neuter it of its importance. Too often we treat our spiritual lives like [a] round of golf At the end of my life, I want my friends and family to remember me as someone who battled for the gospel, who tried to mortify sin in my life, who fought hard for life, and who contended earnestly for the faith.

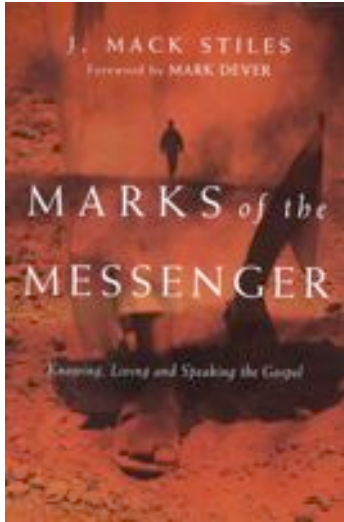
Let's face it, church is boring to kids when they see parents more excited about Disneyland than about the Lord and his people. Are you excited about God, about serving him, about living for him, about pouring your life out for his glory? Our kids need to see churches full of men and women thrilled by the gospel and this includes being thrilled by gospel people. As John put it, "And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he commanded us" (1 John 3:23). Whom are we to love? The church. Is the church in your heart?

Some of you, for the very first time, will be spending time serving in children's ministry. If that's you, let me ask you to dwell on these questions:

1. Do you love the holiness of God?
2. Do you love the Bible?
3. Do you love theology?
4. Do you love children?
5. Do you love the family?
6. Do you love to make disciples?
7. Do you love the church?

Whenever you work with kids, you have an opportunity to change the world. Who knows what challenges the church will face in the next generation? Who knows how the church will be attacked, how the faith will be maligned, how God's people will be mocked? But we have an opportunity to take the faith we've been given and pass it along to the next generation. Whether they carry the baton is up to the Lord. But God will judge us if we fail to hold the baton out to them.

--Aaron Menikoff



Book Review

Marks of the Messenger: Knowing, Living and Speaking the Gospel

by J. Mack Stiles
Reviewed by Todd Pruitt

LET ME BEGIN WITH SOME SELF-DISCLOSURE. I don't like books on evangelism. I find most of them to be

profoundly unhelpful. Some of them are simply bad books. Some are little more than a series of anecdotes strung together. Worse, some of them, while heavy on methodology, (astonishingly!) get the Gospel wrong. Still others heap an enormous amount of guilt upon the unsuspecting reader.

There are some notable exceptions of course. The outstanding *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* by J.I. Packer opened my eyes to the relationship between the providence of God and the witness of his people. Bruce Metzger's *Tell the Truth* drove a stake through the heart of my previously man-centered notions of evangelism. Both of these books ought to be on every Christian's shelf.

I am pleased to say that there is another volume to add to that short list. *Marks of the Messenger* by J. Mack Stiles just may become my new "go-to" book for evangelism. It may be that this book is helpful precisely because its author has for years integrated his profession with a strong sense of responsibility to advance the Gospel. Currently, Stiles lives in the United Arab Emirates where he serves as CEO of Gulf Digital Solutions and is general secretary for the Fellowship of Christian UAE students (FOCUS).

The goal of *Marks of the Messenger* is to make the reader a better evangelist. I suppose that is the target toward which all books on evangelism aim. But through biblical fidelity and sheer simplicity I think Stiles' book may actually accomplish this for many. Nowhere does one get the idea that Stiles is some sort of superhuman witnessing machine. This is helpful for those of us who are quite sure we do not possess a "gift" for evangelism but nevertheless desire to be better witnesses.

Stiles instructs through clear exposition of Scripture and his own experiences as a man seeking to advance the Gospel. He begins by asking "Who does Jesus want us to be?" By beginning with this question Stiles does not allow us to make an end run around some important matters. "It's too easy to jump from wanting to be more like Jesus to 'What Would Jesus Do.' Before we jump, we should make sure we understand who Jesus would have us be... [To] act without a biblical understanding of who Jesus wants us to be in evangelism produces unhealthy evangelists" (p. 17).

Stiles' goal, thankfully, is not to give us yet another "fresh approach" to evangelism. In fact, for one looking for that new method which will finally make him a good witness, this is not your book. And I write that as a way of commending *Marks of the Messenger*. The title alone should be an indication that what Stiles is targeting is not our methods but us.

The book begins in precisely the right place - the Gospel itself. In chapter one Stiles warns against pragmatism which he calls the greatest obstacle to effective evangelism. He calls pragmatic approaches to evangelism "the business of evangelism." "When evangelism is untethered to who we are meant to be as people of faith, evangelistic practice eventually becomes twisted and deformed" (p. 20). Chapters two and three focus on the content of the evangel. Stiles warns against the all too common danger of "assuming the gospel."

In chapters four and five the implications of the Gospel are addressed. This is helpful because of the tendency among Christians to collapse what the Gospel produces into what the Gospel is. Only after clearly establishing what the Gospel is does Stiles turn his attention to what the Gospel produces. He addresses the fruit of the Gospel in our own lives as well as those implications for broader societal impact. Imagine! A book on evangelism which actually makes the evangel the center-piece.

Chapter six deals with the biblical understanding of conversion. Growing up in a large evangelical church I cannot ever recall being taught anything about conversion other than "pray the prayer and you shall be saved." Certainly, I am oversimplifying but you get the picture. Any good training in evangelism must pay careful attention to what God does in conversion, for He is the most important Actor in the process.

Chapters seven through ten focus on taking action. What do we do about the inevitable fear that most Christians face when witnessing (7)? How do we confront and correct worldly notions of God's love (8)? How does love among God's people (the church) produce healthy evangelists (9)? Finally, Stiles offers "a Manifesto for Healthy Evangelism" (10).

Marks of the Messenger will be helpful for any Christian who desires to be a more faithful witness for Christ. I would recommend it for small groups even though there are no discussion questions. A good leader will have no problem designing a fruitful discussion from the pages of this excellent book.

Todd Pruitt is the teaching pastor of Church of the Saviour in Wayne, Pennsylvania. He is a graduate of Southwest Baptist University and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Todd and his wife, Karen, have been married since 1990 and have three children: Kate, Ryan, and Matthew.

**Editors Note: This review comes from The Gospel Coalition and has been unaltered.*

This review can be found at http://thegospelcoalition.org/article/marks_of_the_messenger



Book Review

Jesus on Every Page: 10 Simple Ways to Seek and Find Christ in the Old Testament

by David Murray

Reviewed by Tim Challies

SO WHAT DO YOU do, as a book reviewer, when a good friend writes a book? What would you do if a good friend wrote a not-so-good book? I think about these things sometimes. Thankfully it is not a concern with my friend David Murray and his new book *Jesus On Every Page*. This is a good book. An excellent book, even.

I have a soft spot for books that present subjects that are generally reserved for the halls of academia in a way that is accessible to a general audience. *Jesus On Every Page* is just such a book. It is “an accessible guide to the increasingly subject of Jesus in the Old Testament. Although much has been written to help pastors with preaching Jesus from the Old Testament, there is little that provides sound principles and practical help for the average Christian who wants to explore this important way of knowing Jesus through His Word.”

This is a book that shows how and where Jesus is present in the Old Testament and a book that equips us all to find him and worship him there. David focuses less on the stories and more on the story; less on the heroes and more on the Hero. Not only does this book assure us that Jesus is in the Old Testament and is, in fact, the hero of the Old Testament, it also provides a whole series of methods of discovering and, even better, knowing Jesus in the pages of the Old Testament scriptures.

One of the book’s unique strengths is that it is told biographically. David introduces the subject by tracing his own journey of discovery, as he walked his own road to Emmaus, and not as one who learned it all in a seminary classroom many decades ago. This takes it far out of dry academia and breathes so much life into it.

He focuses on ten ways we can find Jesus in the Old Testament Scriptures and along the way manages to alliterate all ten of the chapter titles:

Christ’s Planet
Christ’s People
Christ’s Presence
Christ’s Precepts
Christ’s Past
Christ’s Prophets
Christ’s Pictures
Christ’s Promises
Christ’s Proverbs
Christ’s Poets

(I have always considered Steve Lawson the master of alliteration, but David may be rivaling him in that department. I wonder if we could get David and Steve together, give them some topics, and watch them have an alliteration battle!)

Jesus On Every Page is a book for all of us, an entry-level guide to the presence of Jesus in the Old Testament scriptures. It’s a book you should consider reading. Parents will benefit as they grow in their ability to read those Old Testament passages—especially those tricky Old Testament passages—and find Christ there for the benefit of their children. Though it is not written specifically for pastors, they, too, will benefit from reading it as they grow in their ability to find and worship Jesus Christ in the Old Testament.

Tim Challies serves as a pastor at Grace Fellowship Church in Toronto, Ontario, primarily giving attention to mentoring and discipleship.

**Editors Note: This review comes from Tim Challies’ blog and has been unaltered.*

This review can be found at <http://www.challies.com/book-reviews/jesus-on-every-page/>

Fall Schedule

Sunday School..... (Beginning September 14)

Mark I: A study through the first half of the Gospel of Mark
(room 230)
Teachers: Bryan Pillsbury & Frank Louthan

Titus: A study through Paul's letter to Titus
(room 210)
Teachers: Larry Chandler & Nathan Kitchens

1 Kings 1-11: A study on the life of Solomon
(room 211)
Teachers: Jeffrey Timmons & Pat Knowles

The Story of God's Kingdom: A study on the biblical theme of God's kingdom
(room 232)
Teachers: Hank Sturgess & John Anderson

Biblical Expository Studies: A study through the book of Zechariah
(room 200)
Teacher: Bill Mitchell

Men's Class: A study through the book of Hebrews
(conference room)
Teacher: Bill Frantz

Growing in Christ: A continuing study on the harmony of the Gospels
(room 212)
Teacher: Bob Neal

Equipping Matters..... (Wednesday Nights)

Life is Work: A biblical, practical perspective on work
(room 210)
Teachers: Jesse Brannen & Ben DeSantis
(September 3 - October 29)

Discipleship in the Home: Leading our families to follow Christ
(room 211)
Teachers: Rick Hutchins & Dustin Butts
(September 3 - October 29)

Bearing the Image of God: A study on what it means to be truly human
(youth room)
Teacher: Aaron Menikoff
(November 5 - December 10)

Important Dates.....

Joint Sunday School	Sept. 7
Lord's Supper	Sept. 7
GABN Annual Meeting	Sept. 8
Knowing MVBC	Sept. 14 & Nov. 2
Church in Conference	Sept. 28 & Nov. 23
Lord's Supper Fellowship Meal	Oct. 5
Thanksgiving Service	Nov. 25
Christmas at Mount Vernon	Dec. 14
Carols & Cocoa	Dec. 17
Christmas Eve Service	Dec. 24

