

PERSPECTIVE

THE MONTHLY JOURNAL OF MOUNT VERNON BAPTIST CHURCH

PATIENTLY LIVING A
GOSPEL-CENTERED LIFE



Welcome to Mount Vernon!

New Members

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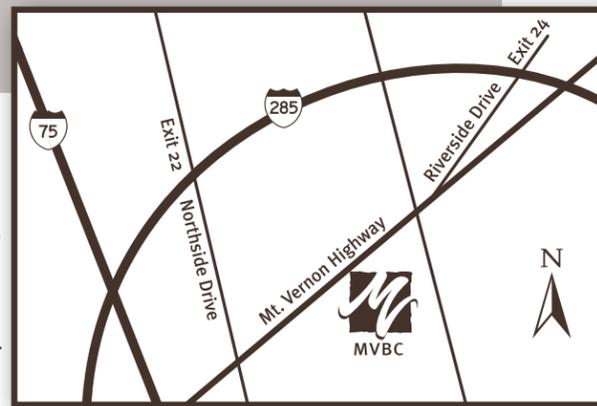
RODNEY & PRISCILLA BARRY
Smyrna



RICHARD & ALISON LAWSON
Atlanta

SERMON SCHEDULE

- November 1 *The World Is Not Enough*
Joel 2:18-32
- November 8 *The Debt Is Too Big*
Joel 3:1-16
- November 15 *The LORD Will Win*
Joel 3:17-21
- November 22 *Loving the Brethren*
1 John 3-4
Guest Preacher: Dr. Michael Haykin
- November 29 *Jesus Is the Word*
John 1:1-18



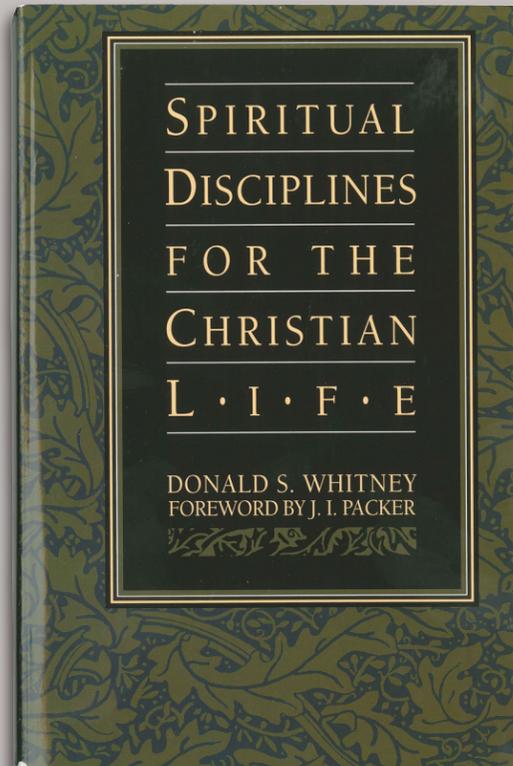
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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15
9:15-10:15 AM IN THE MOUNT VERNON ROOM
JOIN US FOR A FIRST LOOK AT MOUNT VERNON!
COME AND LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR CHURCH AS YOU
MAKE YOUR MEMBERSHIP DECISION.



SPIRITUAL
DISCIPLINES
FOR THE
CHRISTIAN
L · I · F · E

by Donald S. Whitney
Reviewed by Jacob Hall

“Self-discipline.” To modern ears this word usually provokes thoughts of drudgery and legalism. If it is viewed as a virtue today, it’s probably only in the context of an aspiring artist, athlete, or over-achieving student. But is it a matter of joyful Christian consideration?

Scripture tells us that God’s eternal plan ensures that Christians will be conformed into the image of his Son, Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29; 1 Jn. 3:2). Christians have and are being changed into Christlikeness. The question is what means does God use to transform us more into the image of his Son, to make us holy? The Apostle Paul wrote to the young pastor Timothy these instructive words: “Train yourself to be godly” (1 Tim. 4:7). There is intentionality and self-discipline embedded in those words. Christians often reference this verse to support our participation in the process of becoming holy. The question is what does it practically look like to train ourselves to be godly? For years Christians have referred to practices that we use as a means of sanctification as “spiritual disciplines.” And Donald Whitney in his book *Spiritual Disciplines in the Christian Life* seeks to “maintain that the only road to Christian maturity and godliness passes through the practice of spiritual disciplines.” And when we understand that godliness is the goal of the

disciplines, then the disciplines will become a “delight instead of drudgery” (16-17).

What exactly are “spiritual disciplines”? Whitney says they “are those personal and corporate disciplines that promote spiritual growth. They are habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God since biblical times” (17). Specifically speaking, they are Bible intake, prayer, worship, evangelism, service, stewardship, fasting, silence and solitude, journaling, and learning. For the entire book, Whitney examines each discipline with some detail.

The only discipline that takes up two chapters is Bible intake. Chapter two lays out two ways for Bible intake. The first is simply hearing the Word. Whitney states that the most important way to hear the Word of God is the preaching at the ministry of the local church (30). The other way is by reading Scripture for ourselves. He reminds readers of Paul’s request of Timothy to “bring the cloaks that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments” (2 Tim. 4:13). This is a fitting example of how a Christian ought to long to have and ingest God’s word.

The second chapter on Bible intake is geared towards helping the reader understand ways to memorize

Scripture and other helpful ways to incorporate memorization into our personal prayer and study times. Some are simple exercises like repeating the verse while placing emphasis on different words and others are more difficult and time consuming such as discovering personal application from the passage. Other aspects discussed are understanding the context, praying through the word, and taking your time while studying. In a fast paced world where everything is instant, slowing down and taking time to meditate and pray over Scripture is increasingly important for our godliness.

The next spiritual discipline that must also be entered into patiently is prayer. Whitney points out three things about prayer and spends the majority of the chapter expanding on and applying these three aspects. The first is that prayer is expected from us. Jesus instructs us before the Lord’s prayer by saying “When you pray” (Matt. 6:7). The implication of his wording is that we will be praying. It is expected of Christians. Second, prayer is learned like anything in the Christian life. The third and final aspect of prayer that Whitney covers is that prayer is answered.

Following the chapters covering Bible intake and prayer, Whitney shifts the focus to what would be considered more public forms of discipline, specifically worship, evangelism, and service. Worship, as Whitney covers it, has both public and private aspects. We are to prepare our hearts for worshipping the Lord daily, and in our own times of meeting with the Lord we worship him. But we also gather as a church to worship the Lord. Our personal worship of the Lord will have a direct affect on our corporate, public worship of the Lord.

Evangelism is both empowered by God and expected of the believer. Whitney notes that evangelism is not simply a neighborhood block party but our daily actions. Building on Colossians 4:5-6, Whitney talks about how the entire life of a Christian is one of silent and verbal evangelism. We are to make the most of every opportunity to preach the gospel, which means it is our words, but our actions and lifestyles are also on display.

Serving for the purpose of godliness is the next discipline. Jesus said that “the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve” (Matt. 20:28). Whitney points out that the reason Christians have spiritual gifts is to serve the local church. While we use our spiritual gifts for the glory of God, we serve Him as we serve others in a local church. Whitney points us to Hebrews 9:14 in which we are called to understand the purification that comes from Christ is so we can “serve the Lord.” This often means we serve where the church needs us to, despite our feelings of inadequacy or hesitation.

One of the more common misconceptions of stewardship, the sixth discipline, is that it is only considered to be monetary giving. Whitney uses the

broader sense of the term stewardship to move beyond simply giving money, although he is careful to point out that part of this discipline is to be a cheerful giver. Good stewardship includes our finances, time, and abilities. It is using wisely what the Lord has given to us.

Fasting, Whitney notes, is often overlooked because it is easily misunderstood. The normal response is that it will make us “odd for God.” We imagine those who fast to be fanatical, but we are called to abstain from certain things for a period of time to focus on God in our lives. Whitney states that fasting must be done for a purpose, without one, fasting is in vain.

The final three disciplines Whitney covers are silence and solitude, journaling, and learning. Each of these three together allow us, as Christians, to meditate and think on what the Lord is telling us and where he is leading us.

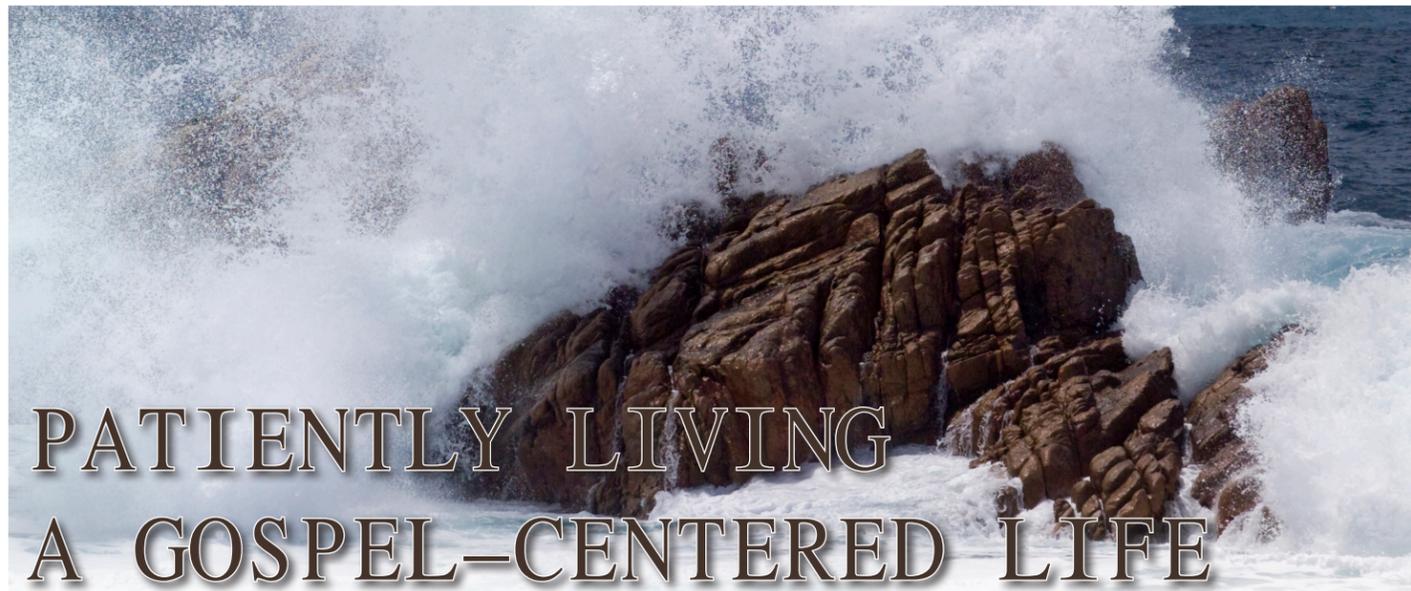
One of the more interesting aspects of the book is that Whitney constantly tells why each of these disciplines are expected of Christians. The end goal of a disciplined life is not to make a notch on a belt but to foster a better and closer relationship with Jesus. ☩



Ladies—
ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1, BRING YOUR FRIENDS, FAMILY, NEIGHBORS, OR CO-WORKERS FOR AN EVENING OF PREPARING YOUR HEART AND HOME FOR THE UPCOMING HOLIDAY SEASON!

THERE WILL BE FOOD SERVED AND SEVERAL MINI SESSIONS PRESENTED INCLUDING MENU PLANNING, A DECORATING DEMONSTRATION, BOW MAKING, AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN A LOCAL SERVICE PROJECT FOR THE SANDY SPRINGS MISSION.

IT WILL BE A GREAT EVENING TO FIND NEW WAYS TO CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF JESUS IN EVERY ASPECT OF THE HOLIDAY. TICKETS ARE REQUIRED. THEY ARE \$15 EACH OR 2 FOR \$25.



PATIENTLY LIVING A GOSPEL-CENTERED LIFE

A version of this essay was originally delivered to the “Ready, Willing, and Able” ministry at Mount Vernon Baptist Church on October 19, 2009.

We have in our Bibles two letters that Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica. At the time, roughly 55 AD, Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia, a province of Rome. It was a port city, a place where business was done, and a place where cultures met. Most importantly, it was a city where God planted a church, a church Paul loved.

Think with me for a few moments about 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17. Notice in these verses how Paul described the Christian life. What are we to look like as Christians? What does it look like to patiently live a gospel-centered life? Paul is clear:

¹³But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. ¹⁴He called you to share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. ¹⁶May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, ¹⁷encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

Context of 2 Thessalonians 1 and 2

Paul wanted them to know the grace and peace that come from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 2).

He thanked God for them because he knew they were growing in the faith and their love for each other was increasing (v. 3). He told them that because of this he boasts about them (v. 4).

Then he told them that God is just. Their suffering is not and will not be in vain. He pointed their eyes forward to that day when “Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels” (v. 7). Paul was pointing them to the day of the LORD. But it is not a day to *fear* the way others are afraid. It is a day to be comforted. God will not punish these believers, but he will “punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (v. 8).

Then Paul shared what is in his mind when he prays for them.

He wanted them to be counted worthy of God’s calling. More than that, as we see in verse 11, Paul prayed for them that God would “fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by faith.” Ultimately, the chief goal is Jesus being glorified *in them* (v. 12).

In chapter two Paul provided still more instruction about the “coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2:1). He warned them of false prophecies which say that the “day of the Lord has already come” (2:2). So today, we should not spend our time trying to read the times the way some read tea leaves. Paul warned of demonic forces that will act in the name of Jesus Christ—God will allow many to believe the lie—but they will be condemned.

But then in verse 13, Paul turned his attention back to the Thessalonians. He does not expect that they will be deluded. He does not expect that they will believe the lies of the age. *Instead, Paul expects that this church will be full of people patiently living gospel-centered lives.*

Overview of 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

God chose the church “to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth” (13). God will allow some to be deluded but others, God will save. How does God do that? Through the Spirit and the Word. The combination of the Spirit and the Word is very powerful! God takes hold of our lives through the Good News that is preached. Verse 14, “He called you to this through our gospel.” In other words, we were called to Christ by the power of the gospel. And why? Again, verse 14, “that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I recently watched a story that had in its plot a poacher’s son who didn’t have a cent to his name. He was unofficially adopted by a clerk who, through a series of good decisions, managed to make himself over 20,000 pounds, a fortune in this 1840s English village. The clerk died but willed this poacher’s son to receive 1000 pounds to be spent on schooling and when he came of age the full fortune! One day that poacher’s son would share in the glory of the clerk’s riches.

How much more do we share in the glories of Christ today and in the age to come? We have received so much: brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers. But in the age to come—eternal life (Mark 10:29-30). As Christians, how can we not be excited

about sharing in the glory of Jesus Christ? The nations are *his* inheritance and we are going to share in that inheritance.

So what does this mean for us? Look at verse 15. We are to have hearts that are encouraged. We are to be strengthened in every good deed and word. This is how the power of God and the gospel are evident in our lives if we are Christians.

The combination of the **SPIRIT**
and the **WORD** is very **POWERFUL!**
God takes hold of **OUR LIVES**
through the **GOOD NEWS** that is preached.

Signs of patiently living a gospel-centered life

1. Knowledge. We should know something. Paul wrote to Christians who had heard his teaching. They were to stand firm in this teaching. They were to hold to this teaching. This means they must have gained knowledge—biblical knowledge.

This is not always easy. We are tempted to think that learning should be easy. But the reality is we have to apply ourselves to God’s Word to have biblical knowledge. We have to dig deep and hard. I remember as a very young Christian being discouraged by the level of knowledge of believers around me. A good friend gave me a proverbial swift kick in the derriere. The point is simple: we can’t hold to the apostle’s teachings if we don’t study the apostle’s words. We should have knowledge. May MVBC be full of knowledgeable Christians!

2. Wisdom. Wisdom isn’t the same thing as knowledge, is it? History is littered with all sorts of people who have knowledge. But as we’ve been studying in James, wisdom is more. It is biblical knowledge on display in a godly life. This is a constant battle. Think of the instant before you sin—gossip, sexual immorality, laziness, pride—whatever it is. At that moment there is a war waging within you. Will you be wise and trust that God’s plan for you is good or will you be foolish and think that you know what is best?

There was a sanctifying work going on in the church at Thessalonica. Paul knew it. He told them how God had chosen them to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. To be sanctified means to be set apart. It means to live a life unlike the lives of those who have not rested in the gospel of Jesus Christ. This means living a life marked not just by biblical knowledge but by biblical wisdom. May MVBC be full of wise Christians!

3. Community. One thing I hear a lot as a pastor—and I’m sure you hear it too—is how much people want deep, abiding, loving relationships. Who doesn’t? Good relationships are wonderful. I look around MVBC and I see all sorts of people who are in wonderful relationships.

But there are those who struggle to find community. Paul wrote to a church full of people growing in Christ together. Sadly, at times, we struggle to find the type of community that we see revealed in the pages of our bibles. Experiencing community is hard work. That’s why I am constantly encouraging MVBC members not just to come on Sunday morning—a very large group—and not merely to find a group of friends with shared

interests—but to come to a smaller meeting of the whole church. It is here, as we meet with others, not like us, that we grow into a biblical community. May MVBC be a vibrant, biblical community!

4. Fruitfulness. Paul wanted the Thessalonians to be encouraged “in every good deed and word.” We must have good deeds. We must be fruitful. How is a Christian fruitful? Are the fruits of the spirit evident in your life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23)?

But I would add that if you really are fruitful, if you really are bearing this kind of spiritual fruit, then your life will be marked by sacrifice. You will pour yourself out as a drink offering for the LORD. You will strive to give Jesus your money and your time in evangelism and service. And as you pour yourself out as a drink offering, as you present your body as a living sacrifice, God will “strengthen you in every good deed and word.” May MVBC be filled with fruitful Christians!

5. Joy. I want to single out one of the fruits of the Spirit for special attention because I think that Paul is getting at it here. In 2 Thess. 2:16, we read that the God who loves us gives us “eternal encouragement and good hope.” He fills us with joy. We are to be a people who mourn over our sin. It is also the case that if we have been forgiven of our sins, we need to have joy. I’m not referring to a joyful personality. Personalities differ from person to person! I’m referring to a deep-seated conviction that God is on his throne, we will be raised from the dead, and we don’t need to live in despair—we can be encouraged.

We will, at times, struggle with depression and sadness. Yet some of the most useful Christians in history have battled the temptation to remain depressed. The point isn’t that they conquered depression or discouragement, the point is they fought. They battled. Men, if you want some insight into how to live a joy-filled Christian life—consider going to a study that Wayne Elliot and Vic Moore are leading on Thursday evenings right here at MVBC.

By the way, why don’t we have joy? Often it is because we make idols of things that bring only temporary pleasure. We are attracted to cotton candy instead of carrots. One brings a temporary, sugary burst of energy and excitement. The other nourishes you substantially. We have to wean ourselves off of those things that can’t truly satisfy us and attach ourselves to things which will genuinely and permanently feed our souls. May MVBC be filled with joyful Christians!

6. Perseverance. Saving faith is lasting faith. And so Paul can write in verse 15, “So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you.” Perseverance is the act of standing firm in the gospel. This is a doctrine that we can’t appreciate too lightly. It get’s back to Aesop’s classic tale of the tortoise and the hare. The hare was full of all sorts of energy but he didn’t “stand firm.” The tortoise was unspectacular but he persevered. I’m looking to be part of a church that perseveres in the faith. Wait and see after years of persevering in the gospel, how the LORD grows us to know him and love him more. May MVBC be filled with persevering Christians!

Take a moment to reflect on your own life. Are knowledge, wisdom, community, fruitfulness, joy, and perseverance evident? Look for signs of spiritual growth. This is God’s plan for our lives. 🙏

~ Aaron Menikoff

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 21, 2009

7:00 pm

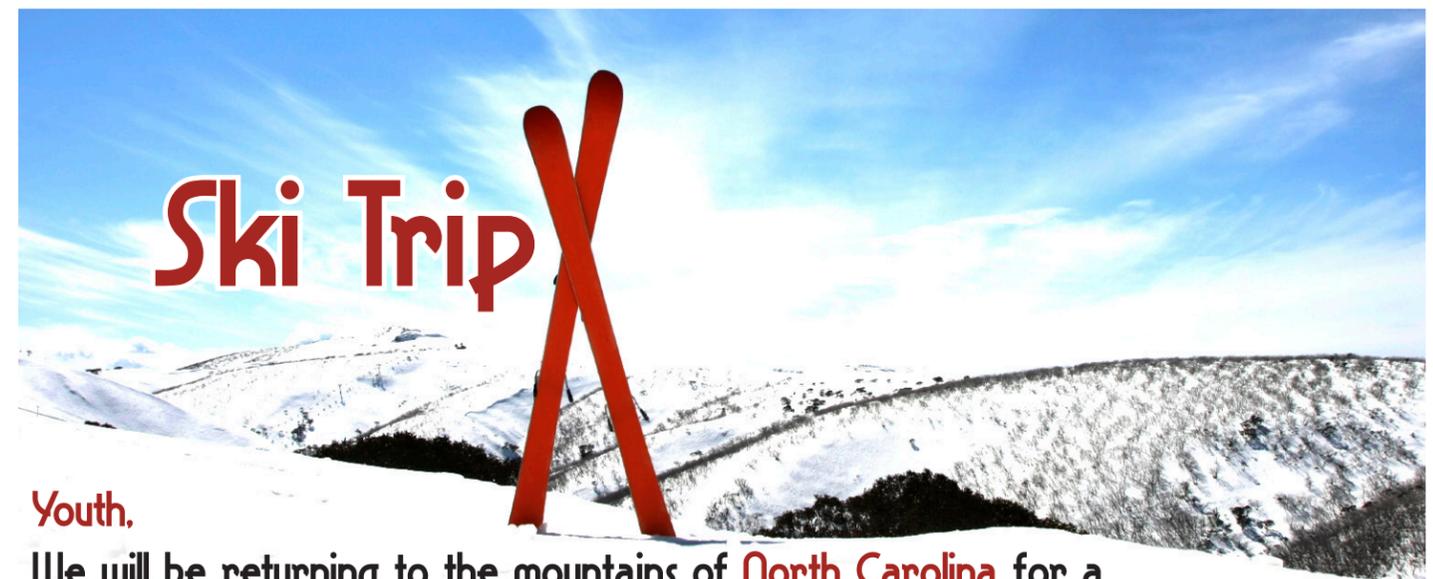


Missional News

The missions committee is publishing a new quarterly report concerning Mount Vernon's missions efforts. They have been categorized into six points of interest:

1. Local Evangelism
2. International
3. Church Planting in North America
4. Pastoral and Missional Training
5. Connectionalism
6. Social Outreach and Rescue Ministries

Copies of *Missional News* are available in various spots around the building.



Youth.

We will be returning to the mountains of **North Carolina** for a weekend of skiing, Bible study, and fellowship. We will leave **January 29** and return **January 31**. This year we are going to be adding a little more to the trip with a visit to Asheville's own "**Fun Depot**."

The cost is \$140 for skiers and \$75 for non-skiers. Registration is due December 20. Please contact **Jacob Hall** if you have any questions or to sign up!

November

1 Daylight Savings Time Ends 6:00pm Lord's Supper	2 7:00pm Singles' Monday Night Dinner	3	4	5	6 6:00pm Deacons' Retreat	7 8:00am Deacons' Retreat 10:00am A Change of Seasons
8	9 6:00pm GBC Annual Meeting	10 9:00am GBC Annual Meeting	11	12	13	14 6:00pm Youth Bonfire
15 9:15am First Look	16 12:00pm RW&A Luncheon	17	18 8:00pm Encouragement for Job Seekers	19	20	21 7:00pm Mount Vernon Dialogues
22 9:00am Joint Sunday School 10:30am Guest Preacher: Dr. Michael Haykin	23	24 5:00pm Wednesday on Tuesday	25	26 Thanksgiving Holidays Church Office Closed	27	28
29	30					

Events Key

- Churchwide
- New Members
- Preschool
- Children (1st-6th grade)
- Missions
- Youth
- Women
- Adults

Happy Birthdays!

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Kyle Blackburn | 19 Jim Hickerson |
| 2 Margie Arnold | Leslie Wilkins |
| Lollie DeFreese | 20 Patricia McDaniel |
| 4 Nathan Pillsbury | 21 Susan Wheaton |
| 5 Valerie Williams | 22 Karen Frantz |
| 7 Sandi Korthals | 23 Connie Heiskell |
| Carolyn Shaw | 24 Hala Mayes |
| 9 Styles Caldwell | Tiffany Peon |
| Eddy Oliver | Dan Taylor |
| 10 Kathy Smith | Jane Vanderzee |
| 11 Jordan Brundage | Toni Winters |
| June Dever | 27 Sue Cranfill |
| Andy Merl | David Nash |
| Marsha Whelpley | 28 Jo Davidson |
| 12 Larry Luttrell | Searcy Garrison |
| 14 Kathleen Ford | Violet Thompson |
| Jane Hall | 30 Suzy Kauffmann |
| Anne Zimmerman | |
| 17 Parker DeFreese | |
| Elaine Johnson | |
| Katie Mattera | |
| Jennifer Miller | |



Operation Christmas Child

A PROJECT of SAMARITAN'S PURSE

We are now collecting shoe boxes for the annual Operation Christmas Child. This ministry founded by Franklin Graham seeks to encourage orphans all across the world who are not fortunate enough to receive gifts. You may drop off your shoe box at the table setup beside Connections Corner between now and Sunday, November 22.

Events

- **LORD'S SUPPER**
NOVEMBER 1 - 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.
- **A CHANGE OF SEASONS**
NOVEMBER 7 - 10:00 AM
Ladies, join us for our next "A Change of Seasons" bringing together the women of Mount Vernon. We will pray, share and encourage one another as we continue to seek Titus 2 relationships. Sign up will be available Wednesday nights during dinner and on "The Edge."
- **YOUTH BONFIRE**
NOVEMBER 14 - 6:00 PM
This promises to be an evening of fellowship with s'mores, hot chocolate, hot dogs, and a large fire in between home plate and the pitcher's mound. Night games will follow!
- **ENCOURAGEMENT FOR JOB SEEKERS**
NOVEMBER 18 - 8:00 PM
We are hosting another Encouragement for Job Seekers meeting. This is a time of spiritual encouragement for anyone unemployed or just wanting to know how to encourage a brother or sister in Christ who may be unemployed. Contact Bryan Pillsbury at bryanpillsbury@mvbchurch.org or 404-323-3873 for more information.
- **MOUNT VERNON DIALOGUES**
NOVEMBER 21 - 7:00 PM
Mount Vernon will be hosting Dr. Michael Haykin for a lecture series on "What Does Islam Have to Do with Christianity?" All are invited, and make a point to invite friends, coworkers, family, etc.
- **JOINT SUNDAY SCHOOL**
NOVEMBER 22 - 9:00 AM
We will be having a joint Sunday School hour with Dr. Michael Haykin discussing the topic "Does 'Baptist' Really Matter?" Dr. Haykin will also be speaking during the morning service.
- **WEDNESDAY ON TUESDAY**
NOVEMBER 24 - 5:00 PM
Due to the Thanksgiving Holidays, all Wednesday night activities will take place on Tuesday.



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WWW.MVBCHURCH.ORG