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PERSPECTIVE

THE MONTHLY JOURNAL OF MOUNT VERNON BAPTIST CHURCH

Is the Bible Enough?

Knowing the Word



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STAFF > SERMON SCHEDULE

- November 4 A Defeated and Victorious Man**
Genesis 37:1-41:57
- November 11 An Careful and Perfect God**
Genesis 42:1-50:26
- November 18 Confidence Isn't Built, It's Bought**
Hebrews 10:19-25
Guest Preacher: Bryan Pillsbury
- November 25 Life for the Dead**
1 Peter 1:1-12

> FIGHTER VERSE

- ³ When I am afraid,
I put my trust in you.
- ⁴ In God, whose word I praise,
in God I trust; I shall not be afraid.
What can flesh do to me?

Psalm 56:3-4

INSIDE THIS EDITION > Holiday Schedule 2012

A preview of the events during the 2012 Christmas season.

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An article on the sufficiency of Scripture.
by Aaron Menikoff

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Use the QR reader on your mobile device to sign up to receive each issue of *Perspective* by email.



DECEMBER 6

7:00 PM

FELLOWSHIP HALL

The Women's Ministry will host their annual Christmas event on Thursday, December 6, starting at 7:00 pm in the fellowship hall. All are invited to attend. A catered meal, festive music, and warm fellowship will be highlighted by a great guest speaker.

Eli Schmucker will be speaking on "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing."

Tickets will be on sale for \$15 per person or \$20 for you and a guest.

What Does the Gospel Bring?

a five-part series through the book of 1 Peter

On Sunday, November 25, Pastor Aaron will begin leading us in a five-part sermon series through the book of 1 Peter.

Each sermon will be available the Tuesday after it is delivered through the Mount Vernon Podcast on iTunes and on the church's website at www.mvbchurch.org.

Sermons are also available on CD for \$5 per copy.

Holiday

December

						1
2 6:00 pm Children's Christmas Musical	3	4	5 6:30 pm "Happy Birthday, Jesus!" Party (Preschool)	6 7:00 pm Hark! the Herald Angels Sing (Women)	7	8
9 7:00 pm Christmas at Mount Vernon & Reception	10	11	12	13	14 6:00 pm Christmas Feast (Students)	15
16	17	18	19 6:15 pm Carols & Cocoa	20	21	22
23 No Evening Service	24 Christmas Eve 5:00 pm Christmas Eve Service Office Closed	25 Christmas Day Office Closed	26 No Wednesday Activities Office Closed	27	28	29
30 No Sunday School No Evening Service	31					

Schedule 2012

December 2 6:00 pm Children's Christmas Musical

The Children's ministry will be presenting the story of Christ's birth and His reason for coming to earth based on the Scriptures.

December 5 6:30 pm "Happy Birthday Jesus!" Party

The preschoolers will be celebrating the birth of Christ with a special party honoring the Savior.

December 6 7:00 pm Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

A catered meal, festive music, and warm fellowship will be highlighted by a great guest speaker, Eli Schmucker. Women, please plan to attend and invite a friend!

December 9 7:00 pm Alleluia, Christ Has Come!

Please join us and bring your friends as the music and worship ministry presents this joyous celebration of Christ through a wide variety of music, from Bach to Shaw to Getty, with a clear presentation of the gospel. Please use this as an evangelistic opportunity for friends and family who need to hear the gospel.

December 19 6:15 pm Carols & Cocoa

Join us after Wednesday Night dinner as we sing carols around the piano with hot cocoa.

December 24 5:00 pm Christmas Eve Service

We will be holding a service of lessons and carols to celebrate the birth of Christ.



Is the Bible Enough?

Knowing the Word

I STARTED GOING TO CHURCH in the Spring of 1990, before I was a Christian. At the time, I knew nothing about churches, denominations, theology, or anything. But I wanted to know more about Jesus, and so I went to church with a friend. I quickly learned one thing: this church believed the Bible, and I was convinced that made them fundamentalists.

When you hear the word “fundamentalist,” you probably think of narrow-minded Christians who frown on dancing, playing cards, and going to movies. But growing up in a non-Christian home, to me, a fundamentalist was *anyone* who believes the Bible is the Word of God.

It is probably not helpful to call ourselves fundamentalists today, but it is important to understand that we are a church that sees the Bible as our final authority—not tradition or the church, not our feelings or experience, but the Word of God.

In this series of articles, I want to answer the question, “Is the Bible Enough?” Is the Bible adequate for our formation and direction as a local church? The answer is, yes! But maybe you have never given careful attention to why we read the Bible, why we sing the Bible, and why we even strive to pray the Bible. If that’s you, please know it’s my prayer that these articles would deepen your appreciation for the Word of God and your love for our God who speaks.

Let’s look at two aspects of Scripture that we need to understand better. First, the Word is trustworthy. Second, the Word is sufficient.

The Word is trustworthy.

When I say “Word” or “Bible,” I’m referring to the 66 books that make up our Old and New Testaments. You see these books listed in the Table of Contents of your Bible. The Old Testament begins with Genesis and takes us through the prophet Malachi. The New Testament begins with four Gospels and ends with the Book of Revelation. These books make up what we call the Word of God.

You may wonder why we don’t have new books today. Some argue we do. Muslims believe new revelation came to Mohammed. Mormons believe new revelation came to Joseph Smith—and continues to come to the head of the Mormon Church. But we have reason to believe that, with the end of the prophets and apostles, no more Scripture has been written.

In Ephesians 2:21, we read that the church was built on the *foundation* of the prophets and apostles. The foundation has been laid. There is no room and no need for more Scripture.

The most astounding miracle of the Christian faith is that the sovereign, powerful, eternal, and unchangeable Creator-God has spoken, revealing himself in words. I’m reading Walter

Isaakson's biography of Benjamin Franklin. Much of what Isaakson knows about Franklin comes from Franklin's own autobiography. Franklin left a record of his thoughts so that we could know him better. This is what God has done! He has left us a record of his character in words so that we can know him.

There are many reasons to believe that the Bible is the true and trustworthy Word of God.

Some reasons are personal. The Bible makes sense of my life. It accurately describes my temptations, my fears, my guilt, even my joy, love, and peace. In other words, in the pages of Scripture I am confronted with an explanation for my life. Who am I? Why am I here? Why do I so often do things I don't want to do? Why am I filled with joy as I praise my Maker? Sociologists and scientists may try to explain this away, but I know better. "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16).

Some reasons are historic. There are so many prophecies in Scripture that have been fulfilled. From the promise of a nation fulfilled by Israel, to the promise of a suffering servant fulfilled by Christ—again and again, God's Word has come true.

Some reasons are textual. The Bible claims to be trustworthy. Notice how Paul begins his letter to the Romans, "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures . . ." (Rom. 1:1-2). The gospel message of Jesus Christ was promised by God *in* the "Holy Scriptures." Paul and the other Jews of his day accepted that the Old Testament was God's Word.

Paul even claimed that his own preaching and writing was the trustworthy Word of God. He commended churches for accepting his message as divine. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 says, "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers."

But the reason I land on more than any other to explain why I believe the Bible is that Jesus did. Jesus accepted the Hebrew Bible as the complete and trustworthy Word of God. I accept the Bible as the Word of God because of my faith in Jesus.

Read the Gospels and this conclusion is inevitable. Jesus cited Scripture. He interpreted Scripture. Jesus even preached from Scripture. He quoted from the Law and the Prophets and the Writings of the Hebrew Bible. He came not to abolish them but to fulfill them. Jesus was a Bible-believer.

Not only that, but Jesus taught with authority. He expected people to accept that he was speaking to them an authoritative and trustworthy Word. He was the prophet to end all prophets. Just look at how many times Jesus says, "I say to you." He presented himself as one with divine authority.

Not only that, but in John 14:26 Jesus promised that he would send the Holy Spirit to remind his apostles of his teaching. The Holy Spirit came and led the apostles to write what we now call the New Testament. "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the

Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."

Here's my point: if you are wrestling with questions of the Bible's accuracy, inerrancy, or authority, the place to begin is Jesus Christ. You have to ask yourself, "Is Jesus who he said he is? Can I believe he did what he said he did? Can I believe he died on the cross for sinners? Can I believe he rose from the dead?" If you have come to believe that Jesus really is the Son of God, then you should take his view of the Bible—and Jesus believed it was true.

Everyone in my family knows who to turn to for medical advice—my wife, Deana. She practiced as a PA for several years, and so it is not unusual for us to get her opinion on everything from bruised knees to sinus infections. She doesn't always tell us what we want to hear, but we know her and we trust her and we take her at her word.

How much more should we trust Jesus! Our conviction that God's Word is trustworthy is grounded in our confidence in a person. Jesus is not *just* a man; he is the *Lord* (1 Corinthians 1:2). He is not *just* a prophet; he is the *last of the prophets* (Hebrews 1:1). He is not *just* the Word of God; he is *God* (John 1:1). If we accept this testimony of Jesus, we will find the Bible true and trustworthy. It all starts with him.

How should we respond to the trustworthiness of Scripture?

First, treasure God's Word. Romans 7:22, Hebrews 6:5, and all of Psalm 119 (the longest chapter in the Bible), speak of God's Word as something to be treasured. But first, you have to treasure Christ. You have to delight in who he is and what he's done for you. As you come to see that he lived the life you could never live, and died the death you deserved to die, you will treasure him *and* you will treasure his words. You will be like the psalmist who prayed, "I remember your ancient laws, O LORD, and I find comfort in them" (Psalm 119:52).

As we share the Gospel and as we teach the Word, we do it to demonstrate the Spirit's power.

Second, become skilled in the Word. Have you ever skipped a stone on the surface of the lake? If you do it right, it seems to effortlessly glide across the water. I fear that too many of us are like those stones. We skip across the surface of the Bible but never plumb its depths. We are content to get a little wet but refuse to get soaked. We don't want a church full of thin stones skipping across the water, but a church full of boulders eager to sink down deep into the lake of God's perfect Word. This takes time and study. It's why I would encourage you to join us for the Sunday School hour. Most of these studies are simply walking through the Bible.

Another thing you can do to become skilled in the Word is come to the Sunday morning service already having read and thought

about the text. I publish the Scripture passages on which I'm going to preach weeks, even months in advance. I do this so that you can get ready, read the text yourself, and come ready to learn.

Third, devote yourself to the ministry of the Word. Notice what Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:13, "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching." Our mission is clear: we open the Word; we read the Word; we preach the Word. That's what we are about. That's what we do. And we do this because the Word is God's Word, it is a trustworthy Word, and there is no better way to spend our time than to humble ourselves before the Lord and ask him what we should do and what we should know and how we should live. The only way we will last is by devoting our lives to the patient and careful ministry of the Word.

God's Word is trustworthy. Therefore, we should treasure the Word, become skilled in the Word, and devote ourselves to the ministry of the Word. But there is another aspect of the Word I want us to consider.

The Word is Sufficient.

In March of 2008, before I was called as the pastor of MVBC, I shared with the Deacons five things that I thought they should know about me. The point I return to again and again, the one that is most important is this: "My confidence is in the Word of God."

I knew that the church was tired after a season of transition. I knew the church was in debt. I knew the church was within the Perimeter and no longer in the heart of North Atlanta's demographic growth. And I wanted them to understand that we had a steep climb ahead, and that my confidence wasn't in my ability or even in their ability, my confidence was in the Word of God. The Bible would be sufficient to build the church.

That same weekend the church had a reception for my family and I where a former Deacon came up to me and very honestly said something like, "Son, I didn't vote for you. I think you're too young, and our problems are too big for you to fix."

I share all this to say that I had some inclination of what I was getting into, and that more than one person warned me it wouldn't be easy. I don't think he meant to, but that Deacon challenged me to check my own heart, to see if I really believed that the Word of God would build his church.

To this day, I remain convinced that the Bible is sufficient to meet our needs. We have to be 100% convinced that only God's Word will build his church. For this very reason, one of my favorite passages in the Bible is 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, where Paul writes:

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

I am not eloquent. I have no superior wisdom. My words, in and of themselves, are not wise and persuasive. But we are not gathered to revel in my wisdom, and when you share the Gospel, the point is not your skill. The point is that as we share the Gospel and as we teach the Word, we do it to demonstrate the Spirit's power. Our job is to place the Word of God before others and then watch the Holy Spirit do the work.

So when I say that the Word is sufficient, I mean that in this Bible is everything we need to become Christians, to grow, and to glorify God. *I'm not saying* that if you become an accountant, everything you need to know about being an accountant is in the Bible. I am saying that the Word of God is perfectly able to lead us to serve the Lord in everything we do.

The key text, and the one that I read to the Deacons in March of 2008, is found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." Though the Bible was written down by men, God is the author. He has given us in his Word all we need "for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." And here is why: verse 17, "so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for *every* good work." The Bible is sufficient for everything we have to do—from how to work to how to marry to how to parent to how to disciple to how to grow and live together as a church.

If you are wrestling with questions of the Bible's accuracy, inerrancy, or authority, the place to begin is Jesus Christ.

So, like a doctor applying ointment to a wound, I see it as my primary task in life to apply the Word to our hearts. And the Word, rightly taught, will do its work. God will use his Word to equip us for every good work, including the building of the church. And when that Deacon told me I was too young to pastor this church, I wanted to receive his counsel, but I also wanted to remind him that regardless of my years, I would never have enough wisdom or savvy to provide leadership for this flock, I was trusting in God's Word and Spirit to do the work. I believed then and I believe now that if God's Word is faithfully preached in the pulpit, taught in our classrooms, and treasured in our homes, God will be glorified and good things will happen.

Our response should be clear.

First, memorize the Word. When we memorize Scripture and apply it to our fight against sin, we are on our way to becoming a boulder that soaks in the lake of God's Word rather than a tiny stone that skips on the surface. We seek, as a church, to memorize at least one verse of the Bible each month, a verse that God will use to equip us for every good work.

Members of Mount Vernon, make it your practice to memorize these verses. Join us in the joy of believing that the Holy Spirit will take these words and apply them to our hearts. Memorize God's Word.

Second, submit your feelings to the Word. Our feelings are not trustworthy; at times they will lead us astray. I have seen this in my own life when my "gut" tells me to indulge my sinful nature. Even as Christians, sin still lives in us, our consciences are not fully sanctified and neither are our feelings. More than once, I have listened as people have justified their sin to me. They *felt* sure that God wouldn't want them to suffer. They *felt* sure that God wouldn't want them to leave an immoral relationship. They *felt* sure that God wouldn't want them to stay married. Even when the Bible clearly spoke to their situation, they insisted that they heard God's voice speaking to their emotions. They allowed their feelings to trump God's Word.

So here is my counsel: submit every decision and every action to the touchstone of Scripture. Just like the President is able to veto any law that Congress passes, let God veto any decision you make when it is not in accord with God's Word.

Third, trust that God's Word will build his church. Martin Luther, the great reformer of the church was asked how he accomplished so much. How was he able to topple a corrupt church regime? His answer was simple: "I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word: otherwise I did nothing. And then, while I slept or drank Wittenberg beer with my Philip of Amsdorf the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that never a prince or emperor did such damage to it."

I want us to have that kind of confidence. As we devote ourselves to teaching and preaching the Word, the Holy Spirit will work in our midst, changing our hearts, changing our church, challenging and encouraging and sanctifying us. It is critical for our future as a church to believe that God's Word is sufficient to build us up.

We can't rely upon our facility, our programming, or our advertising to grow our church. I recently heard about a church with low numbers that made sure its parking lot was full to give outsiders the impression of life. This pastor relied upon the *perception* of others to grow the church. Yet we are called to believe that God's Word is sufficient to thoroughly equip us for every good work, including the building up of the church.

Fourth, trust that God's Word will build you. I begin each membership class at Mount Vernon by making the statement that the church, overall, has lost its confidence in God's Word. We have relied on fads and gimmicks to be relevant and engaging. We have built our churches on a foundation of sand, and many will not hold up on the day of God's judgment. Pastors will surely pay a price for the way they have led—or failed to lead their churches.

But I want to argue that the problem is even deeper. The problem can be found in our living rooms and our bedrooms and our dens where Bibles collect more dust than conversation. Sadly, I know what this is like. I know what it is like for days, even weeks

to go by where the Word of God is treasured in our churches but abandoned in our homes.

If this does not characterize you or your life or your family's life, then praise God! My prayer is that you will continue to be that boulder sinking deep into God's pure Word. But if you have, for whatever reason, abandoned the Word for television or rest or for no reason at all—let me encourage you that *it is not too late!*

I once met with a man in our church who can no longer attend, he and his wife are older and are having a hard time getting out. I was thankful to meet with him because we have never had a conversation. There is about a 50 year age gap between the two of us, so when we met, 1 Timothy 4:12 came to mind, and so I asked him some hard questions. I asked him if he'd been praying. He said he had. I asked him if he'd been reading the Word. He said he hadn't, not for years! I gently spoke to him about his need for the Word, his need to prepare for heaven, and his need to bathe his wife in the Word of God. We prayed, he thanked me, and he went home.

The next day I got a phone call from him. He wanted me to know that before they went to bed the night before, he read Matthew 5 aloud to his wife, and he prayed that they would not be anxious. In the world's eyes, this is such a small thing. But I delighted to see a man honor the Lord by beginning afresh to cherish and use the Bible. The Word is sufficient and it is never too late to trust in the Word of Christ to build you up.

William Tyndale was born around the year 1500 in England. He was a brilliant student, he knew several languages, he was a committed Christian, and he became a faithful chaplain. But Tyndale lived in an age when many Christians, especially church leaders, put more weight on the words spoken by the pope than on the words found in the Bible. An Englishman or woman in the early sixteenth century could not read the Bible because copies could only be found in Latin, the official language of the church.

When Tyndale began to argue that the Bible should be translated into English, he was rebuked by those in authority. So he made it his life's ambition to translate the Bible from the Hebrew and Greek into English. The Roman Catholic Church considered his actions blasphemy. When one priest in particular warned Tyndale of the danger of disobeying the Pope, Tyndale responded, "I defy the Pope, and all his laws; and if God spares my life, ere many years, I will cause the boy that driveth the plow to know more of the Scriptures than thou dost!"

Tyndale was about my age when he was burned at the stake for producing an English translation of the Bible so a common plowboy could read it for himself. His work became the basis of the King James Bible, and, by God's grace, we owe him a debt of gratitude for the English translations we have in our laps today.

My friend, devote yourself to the Word of God. It is trustworthy and sufficient. ■

~ Aaron Menikoff

EVENTS ◀ ▶ BIRTHDAYS

Churchwide ▼

November 4 6:00 pm *Lord's Supper*

We encourage members to examine their hearts and relationships with one another in preparation for this celebration of Christ's death and resurrection.

November 20 6:30 pm *Thanksgiving Service*

Our annual Thanksgiving dinner and service is a great time of singing praises of thanksgiving, sharing testimonies of God's goodness, and hearing a brief devotional. All are invited to attend.

Membership ▼

November 4 9:15 am *Knowing MVBC: Session 1*
12:15 pm *Knowing MVBC: Sessions 2-4*

(See ad to the bottom-right.)

Adult ▼

November 4, 11 4:00 pm *Covenant Training Group Training*

Covenant Groups are a great way to build relationships marked by love, encouragement, and accountability with other members. Pastor Aaron concludes training sessions on leading a small group.

November 18 4:30 pm *Church in Conference*

Members are encouraged to attend our next regularly scheduled Church in Conference where we will be considering many matters related to the life of the church.

November 19 12:00 pm *RW&A Luncheon*

Everyone 50 and older is invited to the monthly RW&A luncheon. Bring a covered dish.

Students ▼

November 18 6:00 pm *Faith & Film*

The student ministry will be watching a movie and then discussing it from a biblical worldview.

EQUIPPING matters

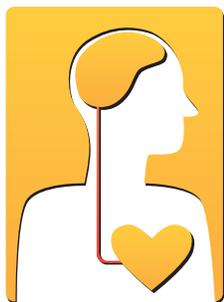
Topical Studies for Christian Thinking & Living

Good living is coupled with good thinking. The head and the heart are connected. Peter said we are to add knowledge to our faith. Why? So that we can live effective and productive lives (2 Peter 1:8).

EQUIPPING MATTERS

is a series of studies offered Wednesday nights to change the way we think and live.

Starting November 5, Pastor Aaron will be leading a 5 week study on the doctrine of sanctification. We will be thinking together about what it looks like to grow in holiness and Christlikeness. All are invited to attend.



Knowing MVBC

Knowing MVBC is a four-session course that introduces you to life at Mount Vernon, covering the following topics:

- **Knowing Our Commitments: Church Covenant**
- **Knowing Our Beliefs: Statement of Faith**
- **Knowing Our Structure: Leadership**
- **Knowing How to Be Involved: Discipling & Serving**

All four sessions will be offered Sunday, January 6, during the Sunday School hour (session 1) and from 12:15-2:30 pm (sessions 2-3). Lunch will be provided. You may sign up on the edge of the bulletin, by contacting the church office at 404-255-3133, or by email at info@mvbchurch.org.



Mount Vernon

BAPTIST CHURCH

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