

PERSPECTIVE

THE MONTHLY JOURNAL OF MOUNT VERNON BAPTIST CHURCH

The Gospel and Friendship



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Welcome to Mount Vernon!

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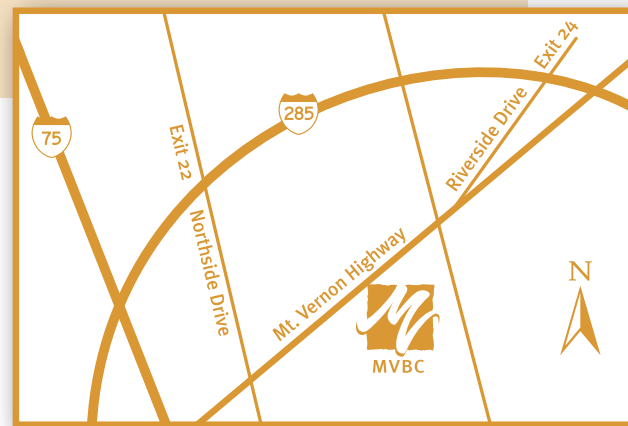
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CAMERON SEARLE
Atlanta



JIM & SUZI VOYLES
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KATHRYN VOYLES
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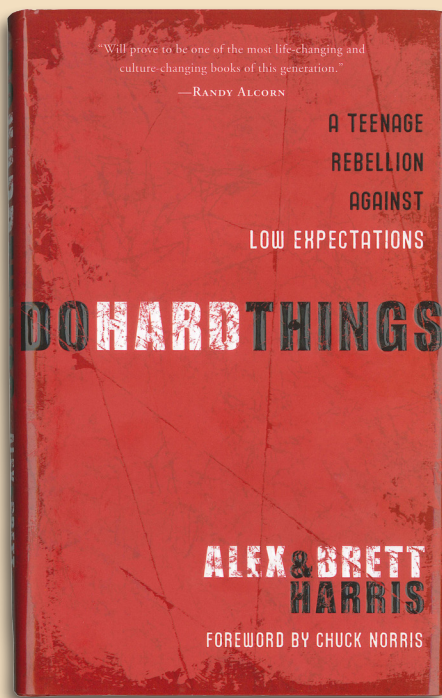


SARAH ANNE VOYLES
Sandy Springs



SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13
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.

The Bookshelf



DO HARD THINGS

by Alex & Brett Harris

Reviewed by Anthony Blalock

Do Hard Things: A Teenage Rebellion Against Low Expectations by Alex and Brett Harris is written by teenagers for teenagers to encourage them to rise above the mediocre standards of today's culture. Alex and Brett are twin brothers from Portland Oregon, and founders of the teen website *therebelution.com*. Written in 2008 when they were nineteen, *Do Hard Things* challenges teenagers to exceed the low expectations set for them by society and their peers and to "do hard things" for the glory of God. The authors attack the idea that the teen years are a time for goofing off, and instead make a case for adolescence as the perfect time to attempt challenging things that will set the stage for the rest of adult life. The authors use biblical insights as well as numerous examples from their own lives and the lives of other teenagers to show the reader five ways in which teens can make a change in their personal lives and society.

The book is divided into three main parts. In the first part, entitled "Rethinking the Teen Years," the brothers begin by describing their own background and how at the age of fifteen they first began to question the low expectations that society has set for teenagers. They go on to describe what they call the "Myth of Adolescence," which is the idea that teenage years are just a time for goofing off and having fun before moving on to join the adult world. They talk about how the word "teenager" and the concept behind it—a person with adult-like freedoms but

without adult responsibilities—is a recent invention that did not exist before the twentieth century. Before that time, people in their teen years regularly held important positions of responsibility and did them well. The authors give several examples, including George Washington, whose first job at seventeen was as the official surveyor of Culpeper County, Virginia, and Clara Barton, who became a nurse at fourteen when a smallpox epidemic swept through her Massachusetts village. By the age of twenty-three, George Washington was commander of the entire Virginia militia and of course went on to become the first president of the United States. Clara Barton was a school teacher by the age of seventeen and went on to found the Red Cross.

In Part 2 of the book, the brothers devote a chapter to each of the "Five Kinds of Hard." They are:

1. "That First Scary Step" - How to do hard things that take you outside of your comfort zone (63-85). These are things like meeting new people, or speaking in public. Such fears are overcome with God's help because God is ready to work through us, even with our limitations (84).
2. "Raising the Bar" - How to do hard things that reject complacency and go beyond what is expected or required (86-106). This includes things like trying to get an A in a class instead of just settling for a C, or cleaning the bathroom without being asked.



We have placed new literature around the church so that you can be informed about what is going on at Mount Vernon through the course of the Fall.

Ministry Cards for the children's, music, youth, and recreation ministries are available which outline the schedule—both regular weekly events and special events which you may want to attend.

Additionally, we have a new Adult Shepherding Group brochure which outlines all of our Adult Sunday morning Bible studies and what each one will be studying through the Fall.

Finally, the new Fall Church Card is available, detailing the sermons through December as well as giving a brief overview of who we are as church.

Please feel free to take these cards and use them to remember events or give them to potential guests.



3. "The Power of Collaboration" - How to do hard things that are too big for you to do alone (107-130). This chapter describes how to recruit others to your cause rather than just giving up on an idea as "too big to tackle."
4. "Small Hard Things" - How to do hard things that don't pay off immediately (131-145). These are acts of self-discipline that don't draw praise from others or whose effects are only seen months later - things like reading your Bible every day or exercising in order to get into shape.
5. "Taking a Stand" - How to do hard things that go against the crowd (146-165). In other words, taking a stand for Christ, even though it may cost you popularity and friends. They wrote, "This is one of the hardest things for teens (or anyone, really) to do. It goes against our natural desire to fit in, to be liked, to make friends...(But) it all boils down to a principle at the heart of Christian character: we have to care more about pleasing God than we care about pleasing man (148).

In each of these chapters, the authors give practical advice, as well as numerous examples of how real teens have overcome these challenges.

The final part of the book is entitled "Join the Rebellion," and it challenges today's teenagers to

be a generation that brings about real change in the world around them. This section describes how teens all over the world are making a difference—teens like Connor Cress, who started Dry Tears, an organization which raises money to dig wells for villages in Africa, or Zach Hunter, who founded Loose Chains to Loosen Chains to raise money and awareness for the fight against modern slavery around the globe. The Harris brothers give many other examples of teenagers who did not listen to those who said they were too young to make a difference. They also give advice to the reader on how to take a decision to do hard things and turn it into practical actions toward achieving that goal.

I found *Do Hard Things* to be an excellent book for teenagers and adults. It's written by teenagers in a style that appeals to other teens, and it encourages them to rise above the low standards that we too often set for them and to do great things for God. Several students in our youth group have already read the book or are in the process of reading it. I hope it leads them to attempt to "do hard things" in their own lives. ☺



So many of us have read good books on marriage and on discipling, but I wonder, how many of us have read a good book on what it means to be a friend? Not many, is my guess. It surprises me that so few books on friendship are read or, perhaps, written. Not all of us are called to be husbands or wives, but we are all called to be friends.

I am never surprised when television programs like *Friends* or *Seinfeld* or *Cheers* skyrocket in the ratings. Television can be like a potent drug, giving the viewer a brief and intense taste of something he longs to experience. The theme to *Cheers* rightly captures the longing in our hearts for a community of friends:

*Sometimes you want to go/
Where everybody knows your name/
And they're always glad you came...*

I used to watch a program called *The Courtship of Eddie's Father*—the tale of a little boy and his friendship with his dad. I remember the opening line of its theme song as well:

People let me tell you about my best friend....

We may be hard-pressed to define friendship (for those interested in an ancient attempt, see Plato's *Lysis*) but we know it when we see it. Friendship exists where there is love, affection, trust, and encouragement. But this is a clumsy answer. They say a dog is man's best friend. It is true that a man may direct love, affection, trust, and encouragement toward a dog and even receive the same from a dog. But when all is said and done, I think most of us want friendships that are deeper and richer than that which the best dog can provide.

For a better understanding of friendship, I turn first to John 15:9-15, where Jesus said to his disciples:

⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be complete. ¹²My command is this: Love

each other as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father, I have made known to you.

In these verses Jesus taught what he went on to model: true friendship requires sacrifice.

Jesus is concerned in John 15 that his disciples persevere in the faith. In verses 1-8, Jesus teaches that true disciples will produce spiritual fruit: "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples" (v. 8). In verses 18-26, Jesus taught that spiritual fruit consists of bearing up under opposition from the world—the world which does not consider Christ to be a friend: "If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also" (v. 20). Again, the point of this chapter is that those who follow Jesus by obeying his commands will face persecution from the world. These are marching orders from Christ to live as friends to God!

Friendship is sacrificial love. John 15:12-14 says, "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command." In other words, friends of Christ are those who love one another. Those who love one another are those who are willing to lay down their lives for one another. At the heart of friendship is love and sacrifice.

Jesus' disciples would not truly understand his teaching until they witnessed and understood his death. Jesus willingly laid down his life. He bore the excruciating pain of the cross and the wrath of God as he died in the place of sinners. We have never seen, nor will we ever know, a more profound and powerful act of love than this. As John put it in his first letter, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us" (1 John 3:16).

The import of this truth for a Christian understanding of

friendship should not be missed. There is much wisdom on friendship throughout the Bible, and the best wisdom comes from the gospel itself. Look at your own friendships and ask yourself the following questions:

(1) "Do I take the initiative in my friendships?" It is very easy to wait for someone else to make the first move, to make the first phone call, to send the first note, to offer the first invitation. The fear of rejection stimulates inaction. Thankfully, God did not wait for us to approach him, "We love because he first loves us" (1 John 4:19). If there is a friendship in your life that is smoldering like an ember in a dying fire, consider rekindling it by taking the initiative.

(2) "Do I sacrifice in my friendships?" The cost of following Jesus is supposed to be reflected in our relationships. This is true for families—biological and spiritual—and it is true of every friendship. Consider what costs you bear to keep a friendship alive. It may be as simple as a willingness to spend an hour on the phone when part of you would rather be sleeping. It may be as trying as driving miles out of your way to be an encouragement. I remember when a friend did just that for me. I needed some counsel and he was in the midst of a road trip. Though I wasn't on his route, he changed his plans to talk in person. That is a friend.

(3) "Do I appreciate my friends for who they are or what they can give me?" Friendship is not an exact science; it is unclear why we gravitate to some people over others. We undoubtedly want to be around people who energize us, and this is appropriate. Nonetheless, if our standard for friendship is always what someone else can do for us then the gospel is missing in the relationship. God did not love the Israelites because of their inherent worth—he simply chose to love them (Deuteronomy 7:7). Shouldn't our friendships be marked by a similar, deliberate commitment?

(4) "Do I want close friends?" I don't assume that everyone wants close friends. We are not all like Plato's Socrates who said, "I have a passion for friends; and I would rather have a good friend than . . . the best horse or dog. Yea, by the dog of Egypt, I should greatly prefer a real friend to all the gold of Darius, or even to Darius himself; I am such a lover of friends as that." No, we don't all have such a passion for friendship. For some, time alone in a book or in front of a movie is rewarding. Others find sufficient encouragement from their immediate family to keep them from seeking out friendships elsewhere. Nonetheless, we should observe that though Jesus enjoyed perfect friendship in the three-ness of the Godhead, he took on human flesh "and became obedient to death—even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8). Through that work on the cross, Christ befriended others. If you are a Christian, Christ befriended you. This is a wonderful motivation for evangelism, yes! But it is also a motivation for seeking out friends to love sacrificially.

(5) "Do I have godly expectations for friendship?" Several years ago I was walking with a friend through the streets of New York. He kindly offered to help me. I kindly turned him down. His offer was so gracious it seemed too much for me to accept. He disagreed. Though these aren't his exact words, his message to me was clear: "I can tell that you don't want to receive my help. It is a very humbling thing to accept help from a friend. You are allowing them to serve you when you have nothing to give in return. But isn't that what friendship is about? Moreover, shouldn't you be willing to ask friends to sacrifice for you as a symbol of your dependence upon them?" He was right. When the gospel is at the heart of our friendships it will lead us to have godly expectations for our friends.

Those who
love one another
are those
who are willing to
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for one another.

At the heart
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Love
and
Sacrifice.

(6) "Do I bear with my friends?" We are often hurt and our patience is often tried by our friends. We wonder if it is worth the fight, if it is worth the pain. Once again, the gospel provides our answer. Looking forward to the grace and mercy of God on display in the cross, Jesus taught his disciples that their lives should also be marked by grace and mercy: "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Matthew 6:14). Forgiveness is to be a pillar in the Christian life that keeps more than one friendship from collapsing.

(7) "Do I turn to God for friendship?" Friendships can be some of the most rewarding and most discouraging relationships on earth—especially when we commit ourselves to godly expectations. It is noteworthy that though the Bible speaks a great deal about our need for others, it speaks even more about our need for God. Consider the Psalms. They are a testimony of God's affection and tender care toward his people. They are songs of God-reliance: "O LORD, I call to you, come quickly to me. Hear my voice when I call you" (Psalm 141:1). This is a prayer of a man who counts the LORD to be his friend.

We must be careful. God is not the same kind of friend that we expect to find in our neighborhood or in our church. As Don Carson stated about God being our friend, "Mutual, reciprocal friendship of the modern variety is not in view, and cannot be without demeaning God." Carson pointed out that though we find friends of God in the Bible, we do not find Jesus or God described as friends of anyone. Our relationship with God is unlike any other. He is our Lord and our Master—we are his slaves and happily so.

Nonetheless, God has befriended us in Christ. All that we truly need is ultimately found in a relationship with him. We can search for friends all day long, but we will never find anyone who loves us and helps us more than God had done and continues to do in Jesus Christ. By all means, Christians ought to be the best friends because we have been befriended by the only Savior. However, our quest for friendships should never outstrip, outshine, or outwork our quest for God. He alone will never, ever let us down.☺

~Aaron Menikoff

Mount
Vernon
Dialogues:
A Series of Theological and Cultural Discussions

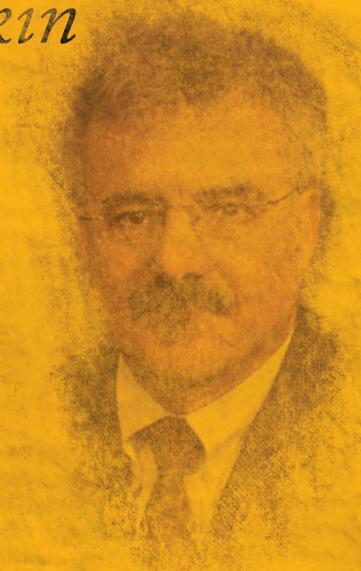
Topic
*What Does Islam Have
to Do with Christianity?*

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 20, 2009

7:00 pm



MIDDLE EAST MISSION TRIP REPORT

by Bryan Pillsbury

SEVEN YEARS AGO, a friend in the ministry representing Arab Vision challenged the MVBC's missions committee to adopt one of their ministry projects. Arab Vision is an organization that creates Christian programming that is contextualized for the Arab world. This means that Arab Christians are creating, producing, and broadcasting Christian materials to reach their own people. The gospel is fundamental to everything they do as they penetrate the world of Islam for Christ. Gary Ried chaired the sub-committee of the Mount Vernon missions and they sought God's leading on which project to adopt. After study and prayer, they recommended that the missions committee adopt a three year film project that was to target the Kabyle (Berber) people group that existed primarily in northern Algeria. So we funded this project at \$10,000 a year for three years. As the years went by, we heard that God was converting people in this particular people group. We rejoiced at what God was doing in this Muslim area.

Our friend who worked for Arab Vision eventually started a new ministry called Zeal. This ministry was not in competition with Arab Vision but was more of a compliment. Where Arab Vision is shot gunning the gospel via satellite TV, Zeal is more focused on indigenous evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. Both are incredibly important ministries and both are supported by Mount Vernon.

One of the amazing facts about Zeal is that they are currently able to employ 33 indigenous pastors, missionaries, and evangelists for less than the cost to send one western missionary family. The missions committee has found Zeal to be making impressive inroads in the Arab world for the gospel.

Three years ago, Zeal identified a Kabyle believer that agreed to take the leadership for a small cell group of new believers. All these were new converts from Islam. We agreed to fund this outreach and provide funding for an evangelical Egyptian pastor to go to Algeria several times a year to disciple this leader. Now this leader is a pastor and they have a government recognized church with over 200 new believers. This Kabyle pastor has started a cell group in 27 different villages. They had a strong desire to meet some of the people from MVBC, so we, the missions committee, prayed and planned to send a small team to Algeria in 2009.

On August 9, Joel Roberts, Dan Taylor, and myself left for the Middle East. We flew into Cairo, Egypt where we stayed for three days. We met with Arab Vision and had a half a day visit with one of the Egyptian pastors who works for Zeal. He

has such a powerful testimony as he shared in detail how his whole family got run over by a bus that had lost its brakes. Since that time, three out of the four family members have had suffered greatly in their recovery from physical wounds. Yet he praises the Lord for His goodness that, in the midst of difficulties, they have experienced the sweet and precious hand of God in their lives.

While we were in Egypt, we had a wonderful opportunity to share the gospel with a Muslim girl named "Sue." Please continue to pray for her conversion. Praise the Lord!

We got our Algerian visas on our last day in Egypt, so we were able to proceed to Algeria as planned. We landed on the thirteenth in Algiers' airport and was picked up by the pastor and his wife. Two hours later, after many security checkpoints, we were in our destination. We participated in a 6-7 hour church conference that was attended by roughly 120 believers. I taught one session in which I shared on three topics: what is the gospel, how to live the gospel, and how to protect the gospel. It was a wonderful day of worship, prayer, teaching, fellowship, and the celebration of 5 baptisms.

The next day we participated in regular worship services and then spent the rest of the day with the pastor's family and some leaders from Zeal. Joel had to fly back to Atlanta the next day while Dan and I went on to Dubai. There we stayed at Mack Stiles house for three days and met with leaders from Mack's campus ministry, the Minister in charge of church planting for the United Christian Church of Dubai, and had a tremendous witnessing opportunity with a bright young man named Amed. (You can continue to pray for his conversion.)

The hardest part of the Dubai visit was sitting down with an Iranian christian couple that had recently been through three long months of torture in Tehran. They were brutally tortured for their faith in Christ but neither wavered nor divulged information that would compromise the Christian church in Iran. To sit across the table from these warriors of the faith was very humbling. Pray for them as they figure out what and where God would have them continue their ministry.

As we came back to our home in Atlanta, we were all humbled at the opportunity to go and represent the family of God at Mount Vernon and to be involved in such tremendous partnerships for the gospel in the Middle East. We thank God for a church that desires to be obedient in helping expand God's kingdom in very difficult places. We serve a most wonderful God who reigns over all of creation. 🙏

September

1	2	3	4	5
6 6:00pm Lord's Supper	7 Memorial Day - Church Office Closed	8	9	10
11 8:00pm Bootcamp: The Middle School Lock-In Experience	12	13 9:15am First Look 12:00pm Youth Parent Luncheon 4:30pm Budget Q & A 6:30pm AASBC Meeting	14	15
16	17	18	19	20 12:00pm Church in Conference 12:30pm New Member Luncheon
21 12:00pm RW&A Luncheon	22	23	24	25
26	27 4:30pm Adult Shepherding Group Leaders' Meeting	28	29	30 Budget Year Ends

Events Key

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

Happy Birthday!

1 Margaret Friend	17 Amanda Gravitt
2 Kenneth Cutshaw	Joy Morrison
Leesa Wheeler	18 John Coleman
3 Greer Henderson	Wiley Hosmer
Preston Pillsbury	Rosie Lobefaro
4 Edward Fisher	Todd Wheaton
Martha Fisher	19 Sherry Harris
Barbara Harkey	20 Andy Blackburn
Drew Roth	22 Bert Neal
5 Jane Johns	Susan Spruill
6 Betty Dewberry	23 Terry Clayton
7 Sam Galbraith	Virginia Pridgen
Frank Olver	Cameron Searle
8 Charlotte Chapman	24 Robin Spangler
10 Carroll Chapman	25 Amy Cofer
Sara Tucker	Laura Salzman
11 Latrelle Hosmer	26 Linda Andrews
12 Betty Mooney	Brian Neal
13 Coleen Bryant	27 Jeremy Brundage
John Hall	Chris Thompson
Alice Ann Sage	29 Gay Gregory
14 Chris Reed	Heidi Higgins
15 Harry Early	Doug Johns
Terri Jo Reeves	

BUDGET 2009-2010 Timeline

September 13
Budget Q&A
4:00 pm

September 20
Budget Vote
Specially Called Church in Conference
12:00 pm

EVENTS

- **LORD'S SUPPER**
SEPTEMBER 6 - 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.
- **BOOTCAMP: THE MIDDLE SCHOOL LOCK-IN EXPERIENCE**
SEPTEMBER 11 - 8:00 PM
We will be kicking off the new school year with a middle school lock-in. The cost is \$10. For more information, contact Jacob Hall at jacobhall@mvbchurch.org or 404-255-3133 x 228.
- **FIRST LOOK**
SEPTEMBER 13 - 9:15 AM
Join us for a First Look at Mount Vernon in the Mount Vernon Room! Come and learn more about our church as you make your membership decision.
- **YOUTH PARENT LUNCHEON**
SEPTEMBER 13 - 12:00 PM
Parents are encouraged to attend a new school year luncheon as we reflect on the past year and discuss our plans for the upcoming school year. The meal will be catered by Slopes BBQ. Please RSVP to Jacob Hall.
- **BUDGET Q & A**
SEPTEMBER 13 - 4:00 PM
We will have a question and answer session for the 2009-2010 Proposed Budget. We encourage all members to attend.
- **AASBC ASSOCIATIONAL MEETING**
SEPTEMBER 13 - 6:30 PM
The Atlanta Association of Southern Baptist Churches will be having their ninth annual meeting at the North Peachtree Baptist Church. There will be no Sunday evening service that day. All are invited.
- **CHURCH IN CONFERENCE**
SEPTEMBER 20 - 12:00 PM
Church family, we are having a specially called Church in Conference. Please make a point to attend. We will be considering many matters related to the life of the church.
- **NEW MEMBER LUNCHEON**
SEPTEMBER 20 - 12:30 PM
New members are a wonderful addition to our church family. In order that they connect and be blessed by the teaching, ministries, and new relationships at MVBC, there will be a luncheon full of information and fellowship! Staff and church leaders will be attending so that any new members can meet them and learn about the many aspects of MVBC.



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