



Alter Calls, the Revivals of Finney, the Program of Campus Crusade & the Hesitancy of a Preacher

When I first became the pastor of Matthew Road thirteen years ago, I was steeped in the evangelical traditions of the second half of the twentieth century. I grew up in a Baptist church that hosted a couple of revivals per year. I went to VBS and camp every summer which included several of the evangelical traditions of the time. Many of the events had conclusions to services with highly emotional appeals, emotional music and "public confessions of faith." At the time, I embraced this. I viewed this as the way church should be done. As I became more involved in ministry in my high school days, I not only embraced it as the best way of evangelical life, I emulated it. I began teaching and preaching in my early teens. By the time I was twenty years old, I had preached 100 sermons and countless speaking engagements at the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and other campus based ministry events. I learned by watching others, and by putting my observations into practice that I could make very emotional appeals at the end of sermons. I knew exactly which song would have the greatest emotional effect in those invitations. This approach to the evangelical alter call or the "invitation" seemed the perfect fit for church life.

A few years into my pastorate, I began to focus my theological studies on church history. After completing my Masters of Divinity, I continued at Southwestern in pursuit of a Masters of Theology. It was during my study of church history that I began to see some concerning trends with the evangelical alter call. I know many people who have come to faith through this very approach, so this is not an absolute critique. The First Great Awakening had a monumental impact on British and American Cultures. Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, John Wesley and others began preaching a gospel

message of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone that involved a conversion experience. Church as a culture and an institution was challenged by a direct call of the preacher on each individual soul. For those of us steeped in evangelical life in America for the last few decades, this seems strange. Of course Christianity is a call on each individual to respond by faith in Christ. But when George Whitefield and John Wesley began preaching to the masses, their message played like a symphony never heard before. The stale, institutional, state-church religious structures were placed in striking contrast to the free, vibrant, individualistic message of these evangelical preachers. They offered confidence in conversion. They presented God as close to all people, even those who felt uncomfortable in the structures of the traditional, institutional church. They preached in open air gatherings to the poor and destitute. In other words, it was much as Jesus had modeled and commanded His disciples. In the process, evangelical Christianity exploded. According to church historian Mark Noll, in 1792 only 21 percent of the world's population considered itself to be Christian. A hundred years later, that percentage had expanded to 34 percent. The evangelical impact due, to the First and Second Great Awakenings, is the primary cause for such massive inroads in world evangelism. Today, we are still seeing the impact of that 100 plus years of growth.

Ironically, evangelical Christianity began to wane around the time of the American Revolution. So much so that Thomas Jefferson stated that, "the present generation will see Unitarianism become the general religion of the United States." As smart as Jefferson was, his prognostication of the death of evangelical

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Children's Ministry



Wednesday, May 14th, 6:30pm

Cream the Commanders (Anita & Brittany) for anyone who has completed their book. Kids will also get to enjoy FREE Sno-To-Go snow cones!

Wednesday, May 21st, 5:30pm

Awards Night Pizza Dinner for all families followed by the awards ceremony at 6:30pm.

Please RSVP for dinner at brittany@matthewroad.org, tagline AWANA Awards Dinner.

Preteen Ranch Camp

Family Worship Rally at MRBC,

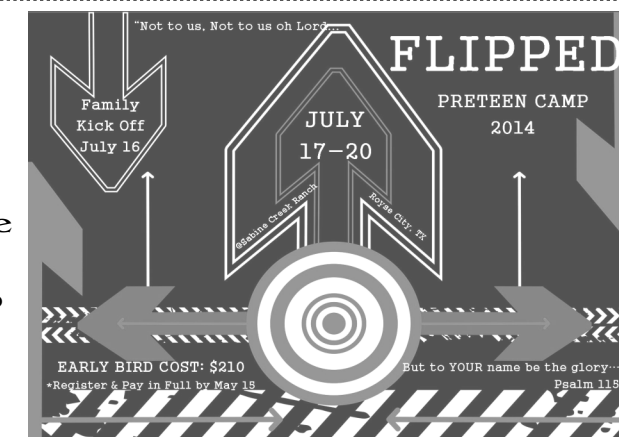
Wednesday, July 16th;

Camp At Sabine Creek Ranch

July 17th - 20th

Early Bird Discount Price of \$210 available for those who register before May 15th!

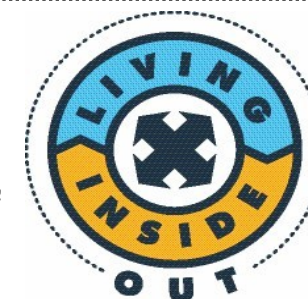
Activities planned are Gagaball, big group worship, small group activities, late night rec, black light party, etc. For more information or to register, see or email Brittany (brittany@matthewroad.org)



PARENT INFORMATION MEETINGS

Sunday, June 4th after the second service in the Sanctuary OR Wednesday, June 7th at 6:00pm in the Sanctuary.

Jesus said, "Everyone who hears my words and puts them into practice is like a wise man." Jesus told many amazing stories and there's so much we can learn from them. **LIVING INSIDE OUT** takes a look at the parables that Jesus told and how we can take the principles from those stories and put them into practice in our everyday lives. Begin inviting friends to come with you and learn what living inside out really is!



VBS Meeting
Sunday, June 8th, 5:00pm,
Ed Bldg, 2nd floor, 1st room on left
WE NEED YOU!

Questions? Please see Brittany or contact her at brittany@matthewroad.org.



Sunday Nights, 6:00pm
Education Building, 2nd Floor

This month we are reviewing all we have been studying in Experiencing God. God wants us to learn who He is, what He is doing, and to let us join Him in His work. He has special plans for us!



Facebook - facebook.com/mrbccchildrens
Blog - mrbccchildrensministry.blogspot.com
Twitter - MRBCmrbc

Christianity could not have been more off the mark. In contrast to his dire prediction, along came the Methodists and Baptists. In the early 1800s, there were a handful of Methodist and Baptist churches in America. Two generations later, there were over 35,000 of these churches all over the eastern seaboard and in the emerging American lands to the west. The evangelical leaders of these churches lived sacrificially for the cause of these four evangelical tenants: conversion of the individual, the mission of the church, the centrality of the Bible and the centrality of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in the message of the church. The Second Great Awakening was born and despite the secularization of modern American life, America is still living with much of the cultural impact of this movement.

As with any movement, abuses can occur. One of the unfortunate byproducts of the movement's growth became the stage production of revivals. Charles Finney was a genius; he understood people. He understood how to create the right environment and mood for his revival events. Preachers like Finney were storytellers, sensationalistic crowd swayers, emotive, and crass. Their appeal was to the lower class citizens. Finney and his legion of disciples were programmatic in their approach with even greater responses from the populace. In Finney's "Measures to Promote Revivals", the gifted orator of the evangelical movement of the nineteenth century defended his methods of ministry. From his perspective, throughout church history, from the time of the New Testament forward, there has always been the use of methods in ministry and that these methods have always been in a state of flux. Finney's ministry set the trend for innovative methods, especially in hosting big events, carefully constructing the right environment. This involved advance advertisement, on the ground organization and the perfect setting to maximize responses. His particular methods of revivals came under scrutiny in his day, especially with critiques of the use of the anxious bench and the protracted meeting. Some complained that Finney did not restrain the emotionalism of those in attendance, accusing him of becoming "an enthusiast." In many ways, the Billy Graham Crusade and Campus Crusade for Christ imitated Finney's approach; big events, carefully constructed environments and an emphasis on the emotional appeal of Christianity.

Doctrinally, Finney broke from many of the previous generation of Evangelicals. The Calvinistic approach of Whitefield and Edwards attributed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit completely on the Sovereignty of God. Finney denied Calvinism and embraced the concept that revival "is not a miracle; it consists entirely in the right exercise of the powers of nature." The big event became the catalyst for revival, for in these meetings "the revivalist and the Holy Spirit" work in tandem. Finney's big event focus led to large numbers of imitators. Camp meetings sprang up all over America. In some cases, annual social calendars revolved around the scheduling of such meetings. The big event became more than an evangelical advancing tool, but a social phenomenon. In the end, when the dust settled and the revival event left town, the long term impact was never anywhere near the short-term emotional impact during the event. There was a lack of a call to obedience to Christ. There was little discipleship and a constant searching for the emotional buzz of the tent revival.

The study of these trends began to cause me great concern, especially when I observed it in my own ministry. Someone would come to the front at an altar call and "get saved." It was emotional. It was spontaneous. It was thrilling. It felt like the Book of Acts on the Day of Pentecost. However, in many cases the individual would drift away. No amount of appeals on my part could gather them back in. There were even a few cases when the person would say to me, "I just wish every Sunday were like that Sunday." What they were looking for, in true American thrill seeking fashion, was the latest emotional buzz to keep them going. I have no doubt that some were truly saved and have been walking with Christ ever since. However, I felt I may have actually harmed some by giving them the confidence of salvation when there was really no intent to follow Christ. They "walked the aisle," "

"said the prayer," and "got saved" but were still lost based on all the evidence of the fruit in their life afterward.

The event that pushed me toward a deemphasized altar call was my study of Campus Crusade for Christ and their 1970's evangelical push, "Here's Life, America." This movement was most identified with the television programming and the bumper stickers "I Found It." The "it" was saving faith in Jesus Christ. Campus Crusade claimed that over one million decisions were documented during the campaign, with many more making decisions that went undetected by Campus Crusade. The numbers represented tremendous success in terms of outreach. The volume of new converts in a three year period was impressive. However, these results still fell far short of Bright's goal of seeing half of the adult population respond to Christ during this campaign. Even Bright acknowledged, a few years after "Here's Life, America," that the campaign had failed to accomplish his dream of fulfilling the Great Commission during "our generation." "Sadly, however, revival has not reached its optimum potential." He felt the reasons for the failure were that Christians were too lazy and that they lacked an understanding of the significance of this moment in history. Even in disappointment, Bright still referred to the results as a "revival" that needed to be optimized. However, the results are staggering in their ineffectual critique of the campaign. "Only 3 percent of those who indicated 'decisions' became new church members, and churches on average gained only one new member per twenty-two campaign volunteers." (from a book by church historian Turner on Campus Crusade) These results are similar when compared to the type of lasting impact of Billy Graham Crusades and other mass evangelistic campaigns.

Three percent! Just three percent of all of those claimed decisions showed any evidence that they had actually become followers of Christ. This is staggering considering the money, time, resources, media, and public relations campaigns employed for this event. Instead of 1 million decisions, the real impact was about 30,000 decisions. How many of those 30,000 decisions would have occurred anyway because the Spirit of God was already working in their lives and had already placed Christians into their lives to begin discipling them? It is results like this that has made me cautious of the emotive, methodological approach to the end of worship services.

Now to my own process of reformation. As the pastor, I am not the head of the church. Christ is the head of the church. As the pastor, there are many other responsibilities that fall outside of my authority. We have committees and ministry teams. We have Sunday school teachers and leaders that make decisions every day that impact the ministries of the church. There is one area where the pastor must have freedom without entanglements. The pastor must have the freedom under God's leadership to conduct worship services as he feels is best. Though I often take input from individuals about sermon and service content, I am the one responsible to God for what takes place when we gather for corporate worship.

Over the past few years, there have been several who have expressed concerns to me about the nature of our invitation in the service. I even did a study of a variety of churches locally and around the country of what happens at the end of their services. Many of the evangelical churches that I admire the most have gone away completely from any altar call or invitation at the end of the service. Many of them end with a prayer and dismissal. Many of them had similar reasoning as the ones I have articulated in this article. So, I am not alone in my reticence about the traditional invitation of evangelicals of the last 200 years.

However, all of that to say, I have also been considering the concerns raised by many within the congregation here at Matthew Road. Many feel there needs to be some way for a person to give expression to what God may be doing in their life through the preaching of the Word. With that, I am going to make some adjustments to the end of the services at Matthew Road. I am also going to take some efforts to explain the process of joining and the purpose of the end of the service. For those who wish to see these types of changes, please be patient with me. I am feeling my way through this. I also want to ensure we have the logistics worked out for this type of change. Please feel free to help me as we make adjustments to these areas of our services. ~ Daniel

Student Ministry

Calendar of Events



May 2nd

TGIF @ Geisendorffs 4640 Betts Dr.,
Grand Prairie, TX, 75052 from 7:00pm-9:30pm

May 18th

Youth Observing Sunday
(Youth who participate in Youth Led Sunday
will sit in on Sunday School classes)

May 25th

Youth Led Sunday
(Youth will lead all three worship services & Bible Studies)



May 28th

Youth Leaders Meeting at 5pm in CommonGrounds
(All Sunday School leaders and Small Group leaders)



June 1st

Parent Meeting in Common Grounds at 5pm



impact

YOUTH CAMP

Impact Camp @LeTourneau University

June 16th-21st

High School Camp

(Cost: \$275 before June 1st, \$300 after)

June 23rd-27th

Middle School Camp

(Cost: \$275 before June 1st, \$300 after)

Women's Ministry



*Be a Sister of Strength! Take the
time to strengthen a sister!*

Make a phone call!

Send a card! Pray!

Let us walk this life together!!!

Have a prayer request? Need more
information about our Women's Ministry
classes or events? Need to get in touch
with our Women's Ministry Coordinator?
Contact us at our email address:
womensministryofmatthewroad@gmail.com.

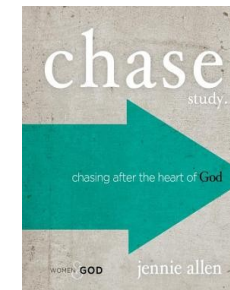


**Wednesday Night
Ladies Bible Study
6:45pm, Conference Room**



Here and Now...There and Then by Beth Moore
is a lecture series on the book of Revelation.

Led by Kim Sweet.



*Join us Mondays from 7:00pm - 8:30pm in the Church Library for
"Chase →", by Jennie Allen.*

David was reckless, sinful, passionate and humble. What can women learn from
his broken life? Jennie Allen's interactive study highlights seven events in
David's life to help you move beyond the appearance of godliness and open up
your deepest self to God's love. Cost: \$10, childcare included.

PAW FALL



Preschool Academy of Westchester (PAW) is a quality
preschool program for children ages 9 months-5 years
old. Your children will enjoy their classroom activities
planned around our curriculum, "Wee Learn" (published by LifeWay). At our
program, your child will learn about sharing, healthy living, academics, music,
American sign-language, the Bible, manners, cooperation and giving. It is a time for
both you and your children to enjoy.

Schedule: We are a Monday & Wednesday preschool. Our hours are 9am - 2pm.

Tuition and Fees: Tuition is \$130.00 per month. There is an annual supply fee of \$75.00 (prorated if
enrolling during the school year) and a registration fee of \$35.00 (non-refundable). Supply and registration
fees are due upon enrollment. (Sibling discounts are available.)

Pease call Cyndi King, at 972-641-7380, for more information.

**Enrollment for Fall Semester
has begun!!!**

20Somethings

Who are we?

We are... sinners in need of God's Grace

We are... part of God's plan for the future

We are... going to make an impact on the world for Christ

We aren't... children any more

We are... making the decisions that will affect the rest of our lives.

We matter to God.

REGULAR SCHEDULE

Bible Study:
Sunday
9:45am - I Corinthians;
location Ed Bldg
5:30pm- Snack/Evangelism;
location FH

Discipleship
Wednesday:
8:30pm - True Spirituality
location CG

Night of Praise

May 3rd, 6:00 pm

We will join together in worship. Join us at 6:00pm for snacks & at 6:30pm we will begin worship. Plan to attend, and bring a friend!

Questions or need more info?
Contact Rachel at rachel@matthewroad.org
or 972-641-2717.

20 SOMETHING'S
MISSION TRIP / SERVICE PROJECT

SERVE MOORE

Who: You!
Sign-Up today.
email Amber.
amber0316@gmail.com
Deadline: May 7th

Where: Moore, Oklahoma
We will be staying in host homes provided by friends and family of the Meeks.

What: Service projects to help renew Moore, OK after last May's tornadoes.

When: May 20-24
So ask off work NOW!!
Why: To minister to those affected by the tornadoes. To grow together as we serve next to each other and study the Word together.

How: The cost is practically free, we just ask you pay a \$10 deposit when you sign-up

May 2014 Events & Activities

For more information, please see our website, www.matthewroad.org, or call the church office at 972-641-2717.

- May 1st: Young @ Heart Breakfast at Outlaws, 8:30am
- May 2nd: PAW/Kinder Teacher Appreciation Dinner, 7:00pm, Fellowship Hall
- May 3rd: 20Somethings Night of Praise, 6:00pm, CommonGrounds
- May 4th: Preteen Camp Meeting, 12:00pm, Sanctuary
- May 5th: MRA Program, 6:00pm, Worship Center
- May 7th: Preteen Camp Meeting, 6:00pm, Sanctuary
- May 11th: Deacon Meeting, 5:00pm, Conference Room
- May 16th: Parent Night Out, 6:30pm, Worship Center, see Cyndi for RSVP
- May 18th: Youth Observation Sunday, during 9:45am Bible Studies
B&G Meeting, 5:00pm, Conference Room
- May 20th - 24th: 20Somethings Serve Moore, see ad
- May 21st: Graduating Seniors Party during Collide, 6:30pm, CommonGrounds, see Zach
AWANA Cream the Commander, 6:30pm, see ad
- May 25th: Youth Led Sunday
- May 26th: Church Office Closed for Memorial Day
- May 28th: Youth Adult Leaders Meeting, 5:00pm, CommonGrounds
Last Wednesday Night Dinner till Fall
AWANA Awards Night, 6:30pm, Worship Center

Discipleship

Sunday Nights:

- ♦ Trek Journey - CommonGrounds, 4:30pm
- ♦ 20Somethings - Fellowship Hall, 5:30pm (ongoing)
- ♦ The Study of Acts - Sanctuary, 6:00pm
- ♦ Ladies Bible Study - Fellowship Hall, 6:00pm
- ♦ Men's Bible Study - ManCave, 6:00pm
- ♦ Adult Bible Study - Library, 6:00pm (ongoing)
- ♦ Adult Bible Study, Experiencing God - Red Room, 6:00pm
- ♦ Guy Talk for youth - CommonGrounds, 6:00pm (ongoing), see Zach for exact location
- ♦ Girl Talk for youth - CommonGrounds, 6:00pm (ongoing), see Zach for exact location
- ♦ MD² for children - Education Building, 6:00pm (ongoing)

Wednesday Nights:

- ♦ AWANA for children - Ed. Building, 6:30pm
- ♦ Collide for youth - CommonGrounds, 6:30pm (ongoing)
- ♦ Adult Bible Studies - Library & Conference Rm, 6:45pm
- ♦ 20Somethings Bible Study - CommonGrounds, 8:30pm

Regular Scheduled Activities

Sundays	
Morning Worship	8:30 & 11:00am
Morning Bible Study (all ages)	9:45am
Trek/Journey (Jr. & Sr. High)	4:30pm
20Somethings Bible Study, FH	5:30pm
Evening Bible Study (all ages)	6:00pm
7:17 Service	7:17pm
Mondays	
PAW Kinder Program	8:45am
PAW Program	9:00am
Ladies Bible Study	7:00pm
Tuesdays	
MRA Program	8:30am
Young @ Heart Activities	9:45am
Wednesdays	
PAW Kinder Program	8:45am
PAW Program	9:00am
Wednesday Night Dinner	5:15pm
Collide (youth)	6:30pm
AWANA Club	6:30pm
Adult Bible Study	6:45pm
20Somethings	8:30pm
Thursdays	
MRA Program	8:30am
Fridays	
Chic time at Chic-Fil-A	9:30am
Saturdays	
Men's Coffee Group	7:30am

Average Morning Attendance for April: 485

Average 7:17 Service Attendance for April: 170