

MAY 2019

## THE HIDDEN HAND OF GOD

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BY BIJAN MIRTOLOOI

Good stories don't just entertain; they also teach. The biblical book of Ruth is a great story, so while it is captivating on a narrative level, it's also deeply instructive. One of the main lessons the book of Ruth teaches is that, despite appearances often to the contrary, God cares for us and is in control of all things.

The theological word that describes God's care for all things is "providence." Providence means that the hidden hand of God is always at work in the ordinary affairs of day-to-day life. Ruth is not a theological treatise reflecting on the doctrine of providence in the form of propositions. Instead,

as we read about the lives of Naomi and Ruth and Boaz we observe a picture of God's providence unfolding in an ordinary family, living in an ordinary town during a not-particularly hopeful time in history.

If you haven't read the story of Ruth, I'd encourage you to do so (it's only 85 verses!) There are at least four ideas there that we learn about the doctrine of providence that we can apply to our own lives.

### **1. Providence is a difficult thing to read in real-time.**

Ruth and Naomi could not, at the end of chapter 1, have had any idea how their story would turn out. And actually they never saw the full end of their story

during their lifetime. Especially in moments of hardship, it can be difficult and even unwise to try to "read" how providence is unfolding in the circumstances of your life. The book of Ruth tells us that God is always working, but it doesn't give us an exact blueprint to determine what he is doing.

### **2. God can handle your hard questions.**

The book of Ruth reminds us that we can bring our questions and doubts before God, and that he can handle them. After a string of tragic events unfold in her life, Naomi declares, "*The almighty has made my life very bitter ... The Lord has afflicted*

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## THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY TO HOPE FOR NEW YORK THIS EASTER

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We are so grateful to everyone within the Redeemer community who gave to the Easter Sacrificial Offering to support the work of our 50+ affiliates across the city.

Your generosity will help us support programming at our affiliates serving New Yorkers in need, including food and shelter

for the homeless, job skills training, youth mentoring, and more. For that, we thank you.

We also invite you to watch our three Story of Hope videos for an even deeper look at the transformation people experience at our affiliates through the love of Christ. You can find those at [hfny.org/easter](http://hfny.org/easter). Here are some highlights from each:

"It wasn't until I came into Teen Challenge, after having lost everything and being a completely, utterly broken person, that I realized the reason that I felt no fulfillment was because my fulfillment really comes from God. That He truly is the one who fills me."

- Ashley, Brooklyn Teen Challenge  
*(Continued on page 6)*

# HFNY STORY OF HOPE: KENNETH LINDH

*Kenneth Lindh grew up in Westchester County, just north of New York City. He worked a full career in the restaurant industry, but hit a turning point while going through a divorce, struggling with substance abuse, experiencing depression and anxiety — and even homelessness.*

*Kenneth was directed to The Bowery Mission, a Hope for New York affiliate that has a residential men's program. Below, he shares his story of how God has been working in his life through The Bowery Mission.*

I come from a family of five children. My parents were Swedish immigrants. We had a pretty well-to-do life with frequent vacations and summer homes. My father owned four restaurants in Manhattan, and my brothers all worked for my father.

When I moved out, I was used to a lifestyle that I wanted to maintain. I went to cooking school, and got married to a woman who had a good education, and between the two of us, we did fairly well. I worked for 20 years in high-end French restaurants and even started a restaurant of my own. In that time, we had three kids. We were the typical Catholic family, going to Mass on Easter Sunday and Christmas. But that was the extent of it.

I worked as an executive chef at NBC for 10 years and then at Marsh & McLennan for two-and-a-half years. Then my job was eliminated. At the same time, I was going through divorce. I had issues with substance abuse. I was also going through some depression and anxiety. All of this was happening at the same time, and it was a turning point for me.

I was tired of working in this business. The stress and ev-

erything else that went with it. I came to a conclusion that I didn't want to do this kind of work anymore. I got off the roller coaster for a while, did some self-evaluation, was living by myself and incurred a lot of debt between child support and substance abuse problems. That continued a downward spiral. I was homeless for a period of time. I lived in a shelter for a little bit, then a halfway house, then I was in treatment programs.

At one point, I was connected with AA and had a job and was doing better. Then I got sick and was in the hospital and out of work for close to a month. I went into depression and continued drinking and ended up in a Bronx Addiction Treatment Center. That's when I was directed to The Bowery Mission.

I came to the Bowery Mission in July of 2018. What this place is doing for me is tremendous. It's been a place for me to settle in and do some self-reflection, get myself back, and find purpose and meaning — and connecting with God is a big part of that.

Being here has helped me see that my God is omnipresent. He has been with me and guided

me through the good times and bad. He heard my foxhole prayers in my darkest moments and got me through situations of hunger, homelessness, depression, divorce, loneliness, and so much more.

Jeremiah 29:11 reads, "For I know the plans that I have for you," declares the Lord. "Plans for welfare and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope."

The plans God has made for me are clearer now. I needed to see my sins and the pain and suffering I caused others. I had to take inventory of my shortcomings and character defects. Until I took a long, hard look at myself and started to make positive changes, I felt like I had no refuge from my world and no refuge from myself, and that is why I'm at The Bowery.

I'm not alone anymore in a hopeless situation, because my God will not go against His word. He continues to show me hope. He's even showing me healthy ways to help others.

Now I seek to keep God close to my heart and to understand Him in love and prayer. He shall receive all the glory! I am no longer dead in sin, but alive to myself and others because of Jesus.

# THREE-YEAR RISE ANNIVERSARY!

BY MAI HARIU-POWELL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE NEW YORK PROJECT

On May 10, Redeemerites will come together to celebrate Redeemer and all that God has done through Rise. (And my goodness, there's lots to share.)

First and foremost, Rise was a campaign that set out with an audacious vision of gospel renewal in our city. It wasn't a vision about one church, one pastor or one denomination. It was bigger than Redeemer or Manhattan; in fact, it was a vision to accelerate the gospel movement in our whole city. And we purposefully set out to do this as a joint venture with Redeemer City to City so that Redeemer could play a part in renewing the whole city.

The strategy has been centered on **New Churches** planted of various denominations, **New Leaders** trained both in vocational and lay ministry and, lastly, **New Buildings** to address the real estate constraints for churches and the larger movement.

In **New Churches**, Redeemer is able to celebrate two solid years of Redeemer LSQ and the launch of Downtown Lab this past December. Downtown Lab is trying out an innovative way to reach New Yorkers who may find it more appealing to attend a non-traditional but liturgically rich congregation on a Wednesday night. While all of this is happening, Redeemer East Side is prepping to launch a congregation in East Harlem this October.

Meanwhile CTC, working with the New York Project, has helped launched 37 new churches with 20 more in the pipe-

line for later this year. These are churches of various denominations, learning together CTC's theological vision of gospel centrality, contextualization, mercy and justice, and evangelism. Nothing says unity like different denominational leaders from all over the city being equipped in the same room under the same gospel for the sake of reaching the city!

In our effort to train up **New Leaders**, Redeemer has been blessed by the leadership of Jen Chan and the Formation team who were involved in everything from daily devotionals, the 4 conferences, Neighborhood Advocate Cohort program with HFNY, congregational expressions like MarriageWorks, and more recently, Questioning Christianity. Through the Residency program, Redeemer was also able to "deepen the bench" on our pastoral leadership and accelerate the growth of pastors like Justin Adour, Chuck Armstrong, Joel Kady, Mark Ro and Michael Smith.

Meanwhile, CTC increased their training programs from three to nine! That is nine programs for existing church leaders and pastors, aspiring planters, seminarians, bi-vocational pastors and lay leaders in their 20's. What was once considered a linear trajectory to becoming a planter is now a more dynamic and customized approach to training leaders. Through these training programs, we have seen over 700 individual leaders trained. More astonishingly, CTC has done this work with representation from 19 different denominations and

planting networks!

As for **New Buildings**, we're still in prayer for a physical home for Redeemer East Side. We've been blessed by the move to a new rental facility at Temple Israel, but for us to be a church that can serve the community 7 days a week and have roots 30, 40 and 50 years from now, the East Side needs a permanent home. Please be praying for the ES Session and Real Estate Committee who have worked tirelessly over the last three years.

All of these highlights (and the many more not mentioned in this long list) happened because of prayer. They happened because God cares deeply about a unifying gospel movement in our city. They happened because of the sacrifices of many who pledged, gave and continue to give to the Rise campaign at Redeemer. They happened because of the sacrifices of the donor community outside of Redeemer who see the cultural significance of New York and dream with us for the gospel to gently permeate every part of our city.

There is so much to celebrate! These milestones and programs are a testament to thoughtful leadership both at Redeemer and CTC. There are many beautiful stories and anecdotes of Redeemerites making life-altering decisions to "rise where they are" to do their part in the gospel movement. We are grateful to God for His abundant provision and grateful to you for your commitment to the vision for a renewed city.

## REDEEMER REPORT

Cregan Cooke  
Kathy Keller  
Heather Klein

The Redeemer Report is a publication of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church.  
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Temple Israel Sanctuary  
112 E75th St.  
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Services: 9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m.  
& 5 p.m.

W83rd Ministry Center  
150 W. 83rd St.  
(btw Columbus & Amsterdam)  
Services: 9:30 a.m.,  
11:30 a.m. & 5 p.m.

West Side Church Plant:  
NY Society for Ethical Culture  
2 W. 64th St.  
(at Central Park West)  
Service: 10:30 a.m.

Salvation Army Auditorium  
120 W. 14th St.  
(btw 6th & 7th Aves.)  
Services: 9:30 a.m. & 5 p.m.  
DT LAB: Wednesdays at 7 p.m.

## FURTHERING THE MISSION OF THE DIACONATE THIS MAY

Here at Redeemer churches we follow the Scriptures, which task the Diaconate with taking care of those in need and distributing among them offerings raised for mercy use. Though “Embodying God’s mercy to those in need” is a simple tagline, it is a far more complicated reality to achieve. Being an extension of God’s mercy requires time, effort, intentionality, compassion, and a desire to see the transforming love of Christ meet others in a very personal way.

It is to this mission that the four Redeemer Diaconates are firmly committed, and it is for this mission that the remarkable deacons and deaconesses (deeks) who serve our four churches are trained, equipped, and support-

ed. This May we are grateful to further the mercy ministry of the Redeemer Diaconate, both through financial and human resources alike.

This month each Redeemer church is excited to welcome the following new deeks to their ranks:

### **Redeemer Downtown**

Jon Endean, Emily Lin  
Elena Zeller

### **Redeemer East Side**

Mary Gallagher, Doug Penn  
Elizabeth Yoo

### **Redeemer Lincoln Square**

Jeff Corelli, Rachel Geib,  
Trey Hicks, David Ho,  
Sharon Kim, Paul Middlekauff,  
Shiuan Wu, Kyle Wukasch

### **Redeemer West Side**

Cassia Farley,  
Stephen De Filippo,  
Rachel Jawahar, Ashley Kerr,  
Steven Lawrence,  
Megan Petersen, Sarah Wells,  
Eddie Whang

Our appreciation goes to Redeemer members for nominating these men and women to be considered for the Diaconate ministry last November. Since then they have undergone extensive training and examination, and have been voted in by congregations.

Please continue to pray for our new and current Diaconate members as they commit and recommit to embodying God’s mercy to fellow congregants in need!

## THE HIDDEN HAND OF GOD ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

me ... The almighty has brought misfortune upon me” (Ruth 1:20-21). We don’t like this part of the story. We want to rush along to chapter 2 when Boaz arrives and a happy love story starts to emerge. But if we sit with Naomi in her time of darkness for at least a few moments, we begin to experience a strange kind of freedom and assurance. God can handle our grief, our questions, and doubt. Sometimes life is just really hard and we need to say *that*. The book of Ruth teaches us that we can, and should, bring all of our hurt to God, and that he can handle

it when we do.

**3. The doctrine of providence is not material to use for counseling others.** If someone you know is going through a hard time and you say, “Don’t worry; God’s hidden hand is at work in your life,” chances are good they will secretly hate you! The doctrine of providence can be like balm that we use to anoint our own souls in moments of fear and grief and spiritual sadness. But it’s not meant to be the main or first bit of counsel you give to another person who is struggling. Notice: throughout the

book of Ruth, it is the characters themselves who identify how God is working in their own lives, whether that work is perceived as good or hard.

**4. The purpose of providence is always Christ.** Reading through Ruth can lead people to conclude that life will always have a discernible happy ending. That would be an inappropriate conclusion to draw. There are plenty of other stories in the Bible that show their people experiencing prolonged periods of sorrow, or even *unhappy* endings. Joseph spent

(Continued on page 5)

## FURTHERING THE MISSION OF THE DIACONATE WITH YOUR FINANCIAL GIFT

In addition to welcoming a new class of deeks this spring, for the first time, the Diaconate’s Mercy Fund Special Offering will be received in May instead of November. The ministry of this vital mercy arm of the Redeemer churches is exclusively funded by generous donors who give above and beyond their regular giving to ensure we have resources to carry out the work of the Diaconate.

We are blessed with a number of supporters who give on a recurring basis throughout the year, but once a year we hold a special offering to raise a large portion of the funds that will allow our deeks to continue offering assistance to those in our churches who are facing partic-

ularly difficult seasons of life.

The Mercy Fund goes toward housing, counseling, food, transportation, and other basic life expenses and serves as a financial supplement to the spiritual and emotional support Diaconate clients receive from their deeks as they move forward toward a place of stability and self-sufficiency. The Mercy Fund also serves as the sole funding entity of all of the Diaconate’s auxiliary ministries, namely Free Indeed weekly grocery distribution, OWLS (50+) care group, women’s divorce care group, and meals ministry, and expenses related to carrying out Diaconate ministry.

We on the Diaconate are privileged to have the opportunity

to embody God’s mercy. And it is one that the deacons and deaconesses at all four Redeemer churches take on with humble joy, marveling at the immense kindness God shows in using His people to bring care and restoration to His Church.

This ministry is made possible with your partnership. We ask that you pray for the deeks themselves and for the scope of the Diaconate’s ministry. We also ask that you give generously, this month and all throughout the year. With this simple act of support, you, too, can embody God’s mercy to those in need in a very practical way.

To give to the Diaconate’s Mercy Fund, please visit [redeemer.com/mercygift](http://redeemer.com/mercygift).

## THE HIDDEN HAND OF GOD ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 5)

twenty years in prison. John the Baptist died in prison. Jeremiah had a hard ministry and was hated for most of it. God’s purpose in providence is not to give you everything you want or think you need.

Rather, the point of providence is to help us begin to connect our story to God’s story, and to see that we are caught up in a larger, grand narrative that has as its culmination in the magnifying of Christ in all things. It is the cross and resurrection of Jesus that stand as the ultimate declaration that, what was meant for evil, God used for good. And so, as the gene-

alogy at the end of Ruth shows, the ultimate purpose of God’s providence is always to reveal Christ in us and through us.

The eighteenth century British poet and hymn-writer, William Cowper, experienced a lifelong battle with depression, grief, and devastating loss. Speaking to a friend he once described his life as a constant “scrambling in the dark.” And yet, even in the midst of his spiritual (and sometimes physical) darkness, he was able to see glimmers of how the doctrine of providence could bring hope in his life. During one of his bouts with depression he wrote

the following poem, which has been a balm for weary hearts ever since:

*God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform.  
He plants his footsteps in the sea  
And rides upon the storm.*

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take  
The clouds you so much dread  
Are big with mercy and shall break  
With blessings on your head*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense  
But trust him for his grace;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.*



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## A SPECIAL EVENING TOGETHER AS ONE CHURCH FAMILY!

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In May the Redeemer family of churches will come together to celebrate all the ways God is growing a gospel movement in our city and then fellowship together with music, food and friends. A reception with heavy hors d'oeuvres and drinks will follow program. Space is limited, so sign up today before we reach capacity. Festive attire encouraged.

**Friday, May 10 at 7 p.m. at W83 Ministry Center, 150 W. 83rd St.**

Registration required: [redeemer.com/springgala](http://redeemer.com/springgala)

To request a scholarship for the reception fee or to request a childcare voucher,  
email: [rise@redeemer.com](mailto:rise@redeemer.com)

## THANK YOU FROM HFNY ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

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"... the obsession and compulsion to use drugs was lifted forever from my life. And that in turn gave me the opportunity and the clarity to follow Jesus."

- Pedro, Recovery House of Worship Brooklyn

"The impact that the Dream Center has had on my life and my son's life ... it's been such a blessing, in the sense of it's filled a void that I had for my family."

- Andrea, Dream Center NYC

If you're interested in joining our work to see all New Yorkers flourish, you can visit [hfny.org/volunteer](http://hfny.org/volunteer) to volunteer at one of our affiliate and [hfny.org/donate](http://hfny.org/donate) to give to strengthen our work.