

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

DECEMBER 1996

This is the fourth in a series of seven articles on the core values of Redeemer

THE GOSPEL CHANGES US

BY TIM KELLER

“The only thing that ‘counts’ is a gospel-transformed life...”

The foundation of Redeemer is our conviction concerning the uniqueness and centrality of the gospel. The first article in this series explained that commitment. All our other “values” flow out of the first one, including our belief that, in the gospel, there is transforming power to change anyone and anything. In Galatians 6:15, Paul says, “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.” He is claiming that it is possible to be very good and moral without a new heart, without being a new creation. The only thing that “counts” is a gospel-transformed life. At Redeemer, we make every effort to cultivate that and distinguish this kind of life from its counterfeits—sentimentality and moral self-effort.

How the gospel changes us.

After the gospel dawns on us, we realize that the way to God is not through our living a righteous

life and giving it to him, but through Christ’s living a righteous life and giving it to us. When such a radical redirection occurs in our hearts, it changes literally everything. I even eat and drink differently (I Cor.10:31).

How does it happen?

First, the gospel completely changes our relationship to God. Before the gospel comes we may obey God, but only out of fear (Rom.8:15-16)—not for his sake, but for the things he could either give or withhold. But in the gospel, we now have everything guaranteed, so we obey God out of grateful love and joy. Thus our relationship to God becomes intensely personal. Before, we did our good deeds (really) for ourselves. Now we love and serve God out of sheer delight and awe before the wonder of who he is. Instead of using God to get to the things you adore, you now use things to get to the God you adore. This unique aesthetic joy in God’s beauty itself is a sign of the

deep change in our motivation through the gospel.

Second, the gospel completely changes our relationship to ourselves. We no longer take our identity from what others think of us, nor from what we think of ourselves, but from who we are in Christ (I Cor.4:3-4). A self-image based on fulfillment of duty produces moralists, and a self-image based on fulfillment of desires produces hedonists. But the gospel produces neither an inferiority complex (since we are an absolute beauty in Christ) nor a superiority complex (since our standing is by grace alone). This unique boldness-plus-humility is a sign of deep change in our psychology through the gospel.

Third, the gospel completely changes our relationships to others. Gospel faith “expresses itself in love.” Paul says in Galatians 5:26 that our new gospel self-image

(continued on page 2)

ANNUAL DIACONAL OFFERING

At both worship services on Sunday, December 8, we will hold our annual special offering for the diaconal fund. This means that the offering baskets will be passed twice; once for the regular offering and a second time for the special diaconal offering. This offering provides most of the money for the deacons and deaconesses to do their work. This may mean helping with medical emergencies, paying rent for someone who has

lost a job, and purchasing groceries and medicine for those in need. Galatians 6:10 says “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, but especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

What is the “diaconate” of Redeemer? We retain this ancient

and Biblical name for our deacons and deaconesses. “Diaconal ministry” has been carried out in the very earliest church (Acts 6:1-6), and deacons and deaconesses were appointed in every local congregation (I Timothy 3:1-11). The work of the diaconate con-

(continued on page 2)

INSIDE:

- PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS
- RELATIONSHIPS MINISTRY

- MUSIC NOTES
- YEAR-END GIVING

MORE...



DIACONAL OFFERING

sists of meeting practical needs with the Spirit and sympathy of Christ.

The diaconate has a distinguished history. The earliest church historians tell us that the deacons and deaconesses visited and served widely in the neighborhoods of the cities where the gospel was spreading. They gave aid to the poor, the elderly, the sick, the prisoners. During times of famine or natural disaster they were the “Red Cross” of their communities. In cities of Northern Europe during the 16th century there was a revival of the diaconate, which founded hospitals, orphanages, cottage industries and emergency shelters.

At Redeemer, the ministry of the diaconate is extremely crucial. They are to lead our whole congregation into being a merciful and caring community. Such practical love for each other is both the result of the gospel and a means of sharing the gospel. “All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them.” (Acts 4:32-34)

If you will not be in the service on December 8, you may mail your gift to the Redeemer Church Office, 271 Madison Ave., 16th Floor, New York, New York 10016. Please memo your check “Diaconal Fund.”

Get out the mufflers and mittens! Redeemer folks are going Christmas caroling at Rockefeller Center on Sunday, Dec. 15. The carolers will gather in the Hunter College lobby (69th Street) at 3 p.m.

THE GOSPEL CHANGES US

prevents us from either disdain and looking down at others (since the gospel has humbled us) or envying and looking up at others (since the gospel has valued us). Because of the gospel, we neither earn our worth through approval from people nor through power over people, so we are neither over-dependent on others, nor afraid of commitment and vulnerability. Beyond this, the gospel prevents us from having attitudes of superiority toward other races and cultures (Gal.2:11-14), and gives us a heart of sacrificial generosity toward the poor (II Cor.9:13). This unique sober love is a sign of deep change in our sociology through the gospel.

“Niceness or Newness”

When Paul says that “circumcision means nothing,” he is making the same point C.S. Lewis did when he said that the gospel is not out to produce “nice” people, but “new” people. That means that at Redeemer we do not put a high premium on “niceness” (what Paul meant by “circumcision”), but on newness of life. It is absolutely crucial that church not make behavioral reformation its goal, but motivational and character transformation.

When a church aims at behavioral reformation over life-transformation, it tends to elevate middle-class ways and customs to virtue, and focuses on superficial changes. For example, a lack of directness or sentimental language is prized, but there is little concern about materialism, pride, or a judgmental and cold spirit.

A merely “nice” church also misses the potent dynamic of changed lives changing other lives in community. This is why small group communities are so important at Redeemer. Jonathan Edwards stressed that the gospel-truth

must be brought not just into contact with the thinking or with the emotions but with the heart, which is the seat of both. Through small group nurtured-relationships, gospel concepts are modeled and loved into lives and hearts in a way that cannot happen elsewhere.

Furthermore, when a church aims at behavioral reformation as its primary goal, it tends to motivate mainly by guilt, driving people to obey out of fear. Motivation based on the gospel having made you into a new person is at once more complex and more simple. More complex, because a real spiritual change has to occur, be nurtured and begin to change long-standing habits of thought and life. But also more simple, because once that newness of life takes hold of a person, constant “guilt trips” become unnecessary to keep the troops in line.

Lastly, when a church aims at behavioral reformation, it primarily celebrates the number of people coming, programs running, dollars given. In fact, there is little else to celebrate. At Redeemer we try to remind ourselves at every opportunity why we have programs, budgets, and all the other apparatus that keeps a church running—it’s in order to see transformed lives. Every staff meeting begins with testimonies of changed lives, as well as congregational meetings, fellowship meals, stewardship campaigns, etc. The beauty and glory of what God has done and continues to do in making new people out of both nice and not-so-nice people provides the energy to continue to run all the programs and other business that supports a church.

REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller

Shirley Dryden • Yvonne Dodd

Dave Jacobs

The Redeemer Report is a publication of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church.

OFFICE • 271 MADISON AVENUE • SUITE 1600 • NEW YORK, NEW YORK • 10016
212-808-4460 (phone) 212-808-4465 (fax)

Redeemer meets Sunday at

HUNTER COLLEGE AUDITORIUM • EAST 69TH BETWEEN PARK AND LEXINGTON

PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS

While America's retail businesses capitalize on the Christmas season early, Christians can make a meaningful beginning by celebrating the traditional Advent. Advent anticipates the first and second coming of Christ. Scripture readings give significance to the full four weeks preceding Christmas Day. If you have young children, you might enjoy using a manual outlining daily devotions and creative projects for the Advent season called: Christ in Christmas—A Family Advent Celebration. The following Scripture readings give significance to the weeks preceding Christmas day.

First Sunday in Advent: December 1

The first week focuses on the prophetic announcements of the coming Christ child.

- Sunday: *2Peter 1:19-21; Isaiah 7:13-14; Matt 1:18-23*
Monday: *Heb 1:1-2; Isaiah 9:1-7; Matt 4:13-16*
Tuesday: *Micah 5:2; Matt 2:1-11; Acts 26:22-29*
Wednesday: *Isaiah 53; Matt 27:12-14, 38, 57-60*
Thursday: *Zechariah 9:9, 11:12-13, 12:10; Matt 21:1-10, 26:15, 27:3-10; John 19:37*
Friday: *Isaiah 42:1-7; Matt 12:17-21; Luke 2:32*
Saturday: *Psalms 22:1-18; Matt 27:35-46*

Second Sunday in Advent: December 8

Angelic pronouncements added to the word given by the prophets.

- Sunday: *Luke 1:5-25*
Monday: *Luke 1:26-38; Psalm 34:7*
Tuesday: *Matt 1:18-25*
Wednesday: *Luke 2:8-20*
Thursday: *Matt 2:1-21; Psalm 91:11-12*
Friday: *Matt 4:11, 28:2-4; Luke 22:43; Acts 1:10-11; 1Thess 4:16-17*
Saturday: *Daniel 7:9-10; Rev. 5:11-12; Matt 24:31; 2Thess 1:7-8*

Third Sunday in Advent: December 15

The shepherds response to the angelic message was to 'make known abroad' what they had heard (*Luke 2:17*).

- Sunday: *Luke 2:1-20*
Monday: *Psalms 23, 79:13, 95:7, 100:3*
Tuesday: *Isaiah 53:6; Matt 18:11-14; 1Peter 2:25*
Wednesday: *Isaiah 40:1-11; Heb 13:20-21*
Thursday: *John 10:1-18, 27-29*
Friday: *Matt 9:35-38; John 21:15-17; 1Peter 5:2-4*
Saturday: *Ezekiel 34:11-16, 23-31*

Fourth Sunday in Advent: December 22

On the Sunday morning before Christmas, these readings focus on the wise men and the One who is all Wisdom: *Matt 2:1-12; 1Cor 1:17-30*

On Christmas Eve, after church services, read: *John 8:12, 9:4-5; Matt 5:14-16; 2Cor 4:3-6* and *1John 1:6-7*, reflecting on and giving thanks for Isaiah's words: "The people that have walked in the darkness have seen a great light."

Struggling with the pain of divorce or separation? We have a Home Fellowship Group that is tackling the crucial issues that you are dealing with. For info, call Cindy Owens, 639-1987 (h) or 889-3370 (w).

MUSIC NOTES

Christmas at Redeemer

Redeemer will hold its annual services of Lessons and Carols on Sunday, December 15, at 10:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. At the morning service special music will include *Glorry to God* from *Messiah*, selections from *Hodie* by Ralph Vaughan-Williams, and Chris Hughes' arrangement of *Silent Night*, performed by the Redeemer Choir and Orchestra. In the evening, the 6:30 Band will be joined by a horn section, soloists, and the men's a cappella group. Bring a friend and arrive early.

6:30 Band Concert to Benefit "His Toy Store."

Enjoy an evening of great jazz and support the newest Hope for New York ministry, His Toy Store, by attending a benefit concert by Redeemer's own 6:30 Band at Church of the Advent Hope, 111 E. 87th Street, between Park and Lexington, on Monday, December 9, at 7:30 p.m. A suggested donation of \$5.00 will be collected at the door to defray rental expenses. Following the hour-long concert, a time of fellowship and refreshments will be held downstairs. There copies of the band's recording *Open My Eyes* will be available for purchase, with a portion of all sales going to support His Toy Store.

New Gospel Choir Begins in January

Do you enjoy singing, but lack the time to be committed to regular choir rehearsals? A new choir is forming that may be just the thing for you. The Redeemer Gospel Choir will begin this January and is open to all—no audition required. All that is required is a joyful heart and a commitment to attend only a few rehearsals as we prepare to sing in a worship service. The Gospel Choir will perform several times a year. For more information, or to sign up, call Tom Jennings or Annie Mintun in the Music Office, 808-4460 ext. 25.

Redeemer will hold its annual services of Lessons and Carols on Sunday, December 15

HOPE FOR NEW YORK

HIS TOY STORE NEEDS VOLUNTEERS DEC. 21

We are still accepting donations of children's toys and clothing for our Christmas project for families in the Bronx. All are invited to volunteer during the one day even at Damascus Christian Church in the Bronx on Saturday, December 21. (Please note the change of date.) His Toy Store will open up to serve needy families from noon to five. Volunteers will be needed for set-up, sales, gift wrap, serving refreshments, supervised play groups for the children, music, transportation, and distribution of the scripture materials. Won't you help? Call Sobeyda Potts at (212) 717-5280, Paige Farrington at (212) 288-6452 or Alison Veleber at (908) 681-8487. Bilingualists with Spanish ability are particularly helpful on the day of the party.

ANGEL TREE DECEMBER 7

Manhattan Bible Church will once again host our fourth annual Angel Tree Christmas party on Saturday, December 7th. (The church is located at 401 W. 205th Street; take the #1 train to the 207 Street stop.) The party begins at noon, but

volunteers will be needed for many tasks early in the day and earlier that week. Call Liz Fearen at (718) 956-0639 if you can help out. We still need drivers to help deliver gifts not picked up at the party (delivery dates are 12/8, 12/14, and 12/15.)

PRISON CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION DECEMBER 7

If you would like to participate in the Christmas party outreach to women in prison, join the Little Sister Project group going to Riker's Island on Saturday, December 7. Call Eve Spitz at (212) 213-5454 for more information.

TUTORING PROGRAM PAGEANT DECEMBER 14

Joe and Connie Ricci have directed and rehearsed the children from Operation Exodus—Inner City, Inc. tutoring program in a Christmas pageant. Please come watch the kids (and your friends, the tutors) on Saturday, December 14, at 10:30 a.m. Call the Riccis at 212-740-2119.

DINNER FOR THE HOMELESS DECEMBER 17

Wrap presents, serve dinner, and decorate tables on Tuesday, December 17, to help provide a hot meal and hospitality for homeless people. Holy

Cross Church, West 42 Street between 8 and 9 Avenues is our location again this year. Marie Carnivale is coordinating this event, so call her at (212) 722-8637 if your home fellowship or group of friends would like to participate.

RUSSIAN CHURCH FELLOWSHIP EVENT

Members of the Russian-speaking church in Brooklyn that Redeemer has helped to plant (and a Redeemer elder, Greg Zhelesny, pastors) will join the Redeemer congregation for a combined worship service on Sunday, December 15 (the same day as our special Christmas service.) Russian translators will be on hand to help out with language problems. Following the morning service, at 1:00 p.m., our Russian brothers and sisters will be hosting us at a fellowship meal with Russian food, music and fun in the Hunter West Building. Be part of getting to know a sister congregation and find out more about what God is doing among Russian immigrants in the Sheepshead Bay/Brighton Beach neighborhoods in Brooklyn.

RELATIONSHIP MINISTRY

BY ANN McDERMOTT

How good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters live together in unity!

Psalms 133:1

The Redeemer relationship ministry has gotten off to a grand start this Fall. Once a month, on the third Monday of the month, an average of 200 people have been meeting for prayer, teaching, small group discussion and fellowship. Spear-headed by Hannibal and Cybele Silver, the ministry's purpose is to help brothers and sisters "honor Christ in their relationships with the opposite sex." The teachings have centered on aspects of Christ-centered relationships such as "Dating with Integrity" and "The Search for a Lasting Love".

The discussion times are guided

by a curriculum on Christ-centered relationships that Dr. Silver is writing. The curriculum aims to help believers understand the nature of relationships from a biblical perspective. Christians need to cultivate true self-knowledge, true affection, true commitment, true love and true intimacy in line with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Under the pastoral guidance of Jeff White this ministry is helping believers not only grow in their faith but in practical application of how we deal with one another in community.

In order to help cultivate relationships we have joined forces with the Redeemer Singles Event Network. Most recently on a Friday evening people gathered at Hackers, Hitters, and Hoops to play Volleyball, video

games and ping pong.

So come and join us for fun, fellowship and who knows what else! The meetings start at 7:15 PM for Bible study and teaching, then break at 8:00 PM for small group discussion led by several Redeemerites. The leaders of this ministry are dependent on prayer and movement of the Holy Spirit for direction and you are invited to join them prior to the meeting for prayer at 6:15 PM. Church of the Advent Hope, 111 East 87th Street, between Park and Lexington Avenues. Keep your eye on the Redeemer Bulletin for upcoming events. If you would like to help in any capacity or would like further information call 370-0475.

DEAR COSMO

Dear Cosmo:

Where did we get these Ushers, from the Olympic Speed-Offering Team? They send the offering basket down my aisle so quickly, I hardly have time to take out my checkbook, much less write my check. Would you consider adding 5 minutes of quiet reflection time in the service so that I can thoughtfully consider an amount to give and write the check before the offering basket passes by?

M. Lynch

Dear Merrill:

We agree that thoughtful consideration should be taken before giving to the church. Is there a reason you wait until after the sermon to do this? Do you give more when Tim includes a movie review in the sermon? If you could gather your thoughts at home in time to have your check written in advance of the service, you could have your check all ready for the passing of the offering plate on Sunday.

Dear Cosmo:

I've really blown it. For 3 years, I've faithfully come to the 6:30 service, where I take my seat in the 5th row center. My goal is to get to Hunter Auditorium just as Tim is adjusting the microphone stand for his comfort before the sermon. Lately, I've been getting there right at 6:30, 6:45, and 7:00 just to find out I've either missed the sermon completely, walked in right in the middle, or am too early and have to wait a long 15 minutes for the sermon to begin. Is it too much to ask to have the preachers give their sermons at the same time every Sunday? I feel like such an intruder at times when I have to climb over people to get to my chair when I'm interrupting a sermon. Thank you for your help.

M. Olesance

Dear Morty:

Thanks for the notice. We were trying to figure out a way to reduce the interruptions in the middle of the service. The services—consisting of music, prayer, greetings, an offering, a sermon, communion, and a benediction—begin at 10:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. promptly. A service ties all of the components together. If you're just interested in the sermon, you might consider a subscription to the Redeemer sermon tapes. They can be mailed to you the week following the sermon. That way you don't have to interrupt the service to find a seat just before the sermon.

Dear Cosmo:

Has Redeemer ever considered nametags for all? How many times do you have to get introduced before someone remembers your name? It would really make for a friendly crowd. Even if everyone wore an Usher tag, this would be an improvement. That's an idea. A church of all Ushers. What do you think?

John Doe

Dear John:

An all Usher church sounds interesting and is currently under consideration. In the mean time, there are blank nametags available for those who want others to remember their name. You can pick up a nametag on the table outside the auditorium (on the lefthand side as you're walking in). Redeemer staff, elders, deacons, deaconesses, ministry leaders, and Ushers are already sporting their nametags.

JOIN THE WORSHIP ARTS MINISTRY

If you are a musician, actor, dancer or artist, there are many opportunities for you to develop and use your gifts at Redeemer. Auditions for all musical groups will be held on January 12, 1997. For more information about the Redeemer Drama Ministry, call Kristi Wedemeyer at 808-4460, ext. 13. For the Redeemer Dance Ministry, call Renee Lancaster at 864-4143. For the International Arts Movement, call Thomas Kurilla at 246-4512. For the Music Ministry, call Tom Jennings at 808-4460, ext. 25. To schedule a music audition, contact Annie Mintun at 808-4460, ext. 25.

GIVING AT YEAR-END

BY DREW FIELD

Every year, many people at Redeemer give significantly larger gifts to the church at year-end. These year-end gifts are needed to help us finish the year within budget and look ahead toward new ministries in the following year. This year, we are praying to receive nearly \$500,000 in year-end giving. In order to help you plan, we offer the following selected general information. (Always consult IRS guidelines or your advisor for specifics regarding your situation.)

Tax Deadlines. Don't delay. According to recent IRS regulations, a gift of cash is complete upon delivery or mailing of cash, a check, or other cash equivalent. Therefore, your checks must be dated and mailed before January 1, 1996. Since our office is closed the week between the holidays, any checks received after Monday, January 6 must be credited in 1997 regardless of the date on the check.

If you itemize. Charitable gifts can bring significant tax savings. Generally, you can deduct all gifts to Redeemer of cash, property, and certain out-of-pocket expenses. You will receive a receipt from the church in early 1997 for your tax records. Plus, receipts from actual out-of-pocket expenses that result from volunteer work may be deductible. Save these receipts.

Gifts of stock bring added tax benefits. This has been a great year in the stock market. By giving a stock donation, you can deduct the current market value and avoid capital gains at the same time. Call 808-4460, ext. 18 for more details.

What's not deductible. The value of any 'substantial benefit' received from a contribution to a charitable organization. Therefore, tapes, books, certain dinners, etc., that you might have been involved in throughout the year may not be considered charitable donations. Also, the value of any personal services that you provide is not deductible, although the cost of materials and other expenses may be deducted.

Legal notice: Neither the author, the publisher, nor this organization is engaged in rendering legal or tax advisory service. For advice and assistance in specific cases, the services of an attorney or other professional advisor should be obtained. The purpose of this publication is to provide information of a general character only. Watch for tax revisions.

"This year, we are praying to receive nearly \$500,000 in year-end giving."

FUN IN THE SNOW

NEW YEAR'S GETAWAY DEC 30-JAN 1

Here's your chance to celebrate the New Year with a getaway to Vermont that will feature a stay at an antique railroad hotel.

In between you'll have plenty of opportunities for downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, tobogganing, ice skating, or just sipping hot chocolate by the big fireplace in our private "Vermont Room."

On New Year's Eve we'll have a special service and then a celebration. We've obtained a special package rate and rates for families.

Rooms are limited, so sign up soon! Registration deadline is December 8. Brochures are available at the registration table in the East Lounge at Hunter College on Sundays. Or you can call Sue Pettit at 718-822-6192.

FEBRUARY SKI RETREAT

It's time to sign up for Redeemer's annual Ski Retreat at Ascutney Mountain Resort in Brownsville, Vermont on President's Weekend. We'll spend three days and two nights skiing Pico Mountain. December 15th is the deadline for making your \$50 deposit to hold your place. Come by the registration table in the East Lounge for details or call Tom Wall at 212-639-1279.