

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

JANUARY 1997

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

MOVEMENT MINDSET

BY TIM KELLER

"It will turn the world desert into a garden, ...and even now this renewal has begun."

From the earliest days of Redeemer, we have said, "we are not just a church, but a movement." We hoped that this was a way of avoiding the traditional concept of the church as a static institution, rather than a dynamic agent with a missionary form.

The church is to be a vital growing organism, a strengthening Body (Eph.4:15-16), a bounteous, blossoming garden (I Cor.3:6-9; Mark 4:8). Christians are representatives of the kingdom of God (Acts 1:6-8), which grows from a tiny seed into the greatest of trees (Matt. 13:31-32), from a small stone into a mountain that fills the whole earth (Dan. 2:35). The kingdom of God is the renewal of the whole world through the introduction of

God's Word (Matt. 13:19,23) and Spirit (Matt. 12:28). The kingdom is gradually but inexorably advancing and growing (Matt. 11:12). It is here (Mark 1:14-15) yet not fully (Matt. 25:44). It will turn the world desert into a garden, healing all broken bodies, souls, and communities (Isaiah 35:1-10), and even now this renewal has begun (Matt. 11:4-5). It is not a political kingdom, but it expresses itself through merciful deeds, seeking peace (Matt. 5:1-10), through deep peace and spiritual joy (Rom. 14:17). These images of growth, spread, dynamism, and renewal have been seminal to Redeemer, and though they are staggering in their implications, we have tried to incorporate them into our organizational structure. How have they shaped our practice?

First, we encourage lay Christians to initiate and lead ministries. Every Christian is a "priest" (I Peter 2:9), every Christian is a minister, called to declare God's glory (I Peter 2:9). Especially through our small groups, Christians are enabled to nurture, shepherd, care, and serve one another (Heb. 3:13, 10:24-25; Col. 3:16; Gal. 6:1).

Second, while we insist on accountability and have set up a very well organized structure of reporting and supervision, we do not try to control all ministries from a central bureaucracy. Rather we "empower" teams of Christians to plan and execute creative new ministries. We would rather encourage lay involvement and

(continued on page 2)

ACCOUNTABILITY GROUPS, PART 2

BY TIM PETTIT

In the last article about accountability, I outlined the biblical reasons why we need to meet regularly with someone who will point out our spiritual blindspots. We are masters of self-deceit and need someone to hold a mirror up to us so we can see our real selves.

"I have done an excellent job of convincing the people around me that I am too busy—too busy doing the busy work I am doing—to have any time for friendships," wrote Mike Yaconelli, who heads a prospering worldwide ministry to youth. "I have convinced them to buy into the myth of my busyness."

If that's you, start praying for that special friendship. Then put yourself in a place where God will lead you to the right people: In Home Fellowship Groups, in School of Discipleship classes, on church retreats, working side by side with people in mercy ministries or with the dozens of volunteers who make the Sunday services work.

"Fine," you say, "but where do I find the time to pursue an accountability relationship?"

Many people have their accountability meetings over breakfast or

lunch, so there's no excuse about schedule conflicts. That's important, since an intimate accountability relationship does not take the place of the worship, pastoral care and prayer that you get from a Home Fellowship Group. (Your fellowship group might be able to hold you accountable. But since we encourage our groups to be open to new people, you may not feel comfortable confessing your sin to people you don't know.)

Since we are watchmen, and not

(continued on page 2)

INSIDE:

- LESSONS FROM KING & MALCOLM X
- NEW GOSPEL CHOIR
- ABOUT "FORGIVENESS"
- SERVANT LEADERSHIP TO MEET MORE...



MOVEMENT MINDSET (continued from page 1)

creativity, preferring to “mop up” mistakes after they’ve happened than to exert such a high level of control that no mistakes are ever in danger of happening (and not much ministry, either.)

Third, we know that the kingdom of God is not growing only through our denomination and church—it is vast and universal—and therefore we at Redeemer try not to be turf-conscious or possessive of our members, ministries, and resources. We are willing to network and partner with a great variety of churches and ministries in the city in order to see communities rebuilt and lives healed in our city through the Word and Spirit.

Fourth, while we have distinctives and boundaries as a Presbyterian church, we stress our unity with all who believe the historic Christian faith. We lift up “mere Christianity”—the gospel—as we understand it, and we positively expound and apply it, rather than constantly using theological buzz words to stress our distinctives and to distance ourselves from other believers. Since the gospel of grace is the fountain of Re-

formed theology, those who are acquainted with it will recognize the convictions behind the preaching and teaching at Redeemer. Others merely observe that “they’ve never heard anything like this before” and burst into bloom!

But mainly, the “movement mindset” of Redeemer is expressed in a commitment to spawn and help scores and even hundreds of new churches get planted in New York City over the next twenty-five years. Eventually, we hope that Redeemer will be only one of a large network of churches in the metro area with common theological commitments yet a rich diversity of gifts and ministry models, all working together to spread God’s kingdom. Redeemer itself will continually encourage leaders and people to gather themselves into churches to better address the people and needs of their neighborhoods and regions. Eventually we will probably see two or three “daughter” churches a year begun from within our congregation. But we also want to partner with other churches and movements to help them begin sister

churches in the metro area.

What are the necessary ingredients for Redeemer to become a movement of churches? We must think on a grand, “kingdom” scale, rather than focusing on institutional survival. We must make church planting as much a part of our budget and spiritual “metabolism” as worship or education. We must have a vision not so much for a flourishing church, as for a flourishing city, transformed by the gospel. We must find partners—individuals and churches—both here in NYC and around the country, who share in Redeemer’s vision to become a movement of churches. Most importantly, we need to find ways to continually reproduce lay leaders and ministers with this same vision, who also understand the theological vision of Redeemer (as articulated in these articles), and who are gifted to develop vital churches all through the city and metro area.

It is a large vision, and we are humbled before it. But nothing else is worthy of the God we serve and the city in which we live.

ACCOUNTABILITY (continued from page 1)

watchdogs, accountability meetings are times to speak freely about our hurts, our joys, our relationships, our hopes and our fears. If your friends are truly listening, it’s during these times that they will pick up warning signals of potentially sinful actions.

Perhaps the most important accountability question to ask is, “Are you preaching the Gospel to yourself?” In other words, am I daily reminding myself that when I succeed, it is by God’s grace and not by my moral or spiritual superiority? That when I fail, I can flee to the One Who is my Savior, not my judge?

As Pastor Scotty Smith said of his

accountability relationship with singer Michael Card, “We’re probably more committed to holding each other accountable for believing the gospel than simply the specifics of what we do. Issues such as sexuality and power are ancillary. Our relationship is centered on the gospel.”

What about the hard-hitting questions? They can sting, but God tells us that “wounds from a friend can be trusted” (*Proverbs 27:6*). Accountability partners might want to periodically ask each other questions about their thought lives, relationships, marriages, their times alone with God, their motives in do-

ing certain things, their jobs and their finances.

For example, if one person repeatedly says, “Man, I’m broke,” an accountability partner might respond, “Why? How are you spending your money?” When one partner returns from a solo business trip, he or she might be asked, “What were you watching, seeing, listening to or reading?” A key question comes at the end of the exchange: “Am I being honest with you guys?”

For more information about starting an accountability relationship, call Tim Pettit, director of church life, 808-4460, ext. 41.

REDEEMER REPORT

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FORGIVENESS

BY KATHY KELLER

Celebrating the New Year by making resolutions to change our behavior for the better is a time-honored tradition. The impulse to make resolutions is born of a deep need to feel hopeful about the future through a sense of renewal, starting over, shrugging off the failures of the past, and beginning again with a clean slate.

So as long as we're throwing off the accumulated garbage in our lives and vowing to be more admirable human beings, let's not neglect the role of forgiveness in our lives. Nothing drags you down, holds you back and ties you to the failures and grief of the past like grudges, resentments, anger, and bitterness.

Agreeing that forgiveness is a good and desirable thing, many people are nevertheless unable to figure out how to go about it. Here, then is a rudimentary guide to forgiveness.

1) Motivation First of all, your motivation for forgiving someone cannot be primarily because it's good for you. Self-interest is a powerful motivator, and it is often in the name of "being good to yourself" that forgiveness is urged on us by counselors.

However, this kind of motivation will not carry you very far, or for very long. When Jesus was asked how often a person had to forgive his brother, his answer was "Seventy-times seven," or, more bluntly, "As long as it takes." No doubt in response to the dismay on his disciples' faces, Jesus told the parable in *Matt. 18:23-35*.

A man is brought to the king to pay a debt so immense that it is impossible for him to find the resources necessary. He throws himself on the mercy of the king, who pities him and forgives his debt. On the way home from this joyous occasion, he encounters a fellow servant who owes him a small amount, but one which he doesn't happen to have on him. Ignoring his promises to repay the debt, the man has his fellow servant put into debtor's prison. When the king hears of this travesty, he revokes his former mercy and sends the man himself to prison.

Jesus's point was that our motiva-

tion for forgiving others must ultimately reside in our awareness of God having forgiven us. Since our debt to God is immense and unpayable, only the death of Jesus was enough to satisfy it. We are told in *Ephesians 4:32* that we must "forgiv[e] one another, as God in Christ forgave you." If gratitude for God's forgiveness is the mainspring of our being, seeing the sins of others as small and easily forgivable by comparison will come naturally.

2) Method You must reject all the false alternatives to forgiveness. This means that we are not allowed to indulge in cleverly disguised revenge strategies, such as character assassination, or even in rooting silently for another person's failure and humiliation.

Does this mean that we'll be in danger of that most serious of all modern sins, repressing our emotions? Well, no. There is another choice between denying the depth and reality of our anger and bitterness and ventilating it in hostile words or actions. That third alternative is to acknowledge our emotions, and then to put them to death by allowing them not a moment's encouragement or sustenance. Forgiving someone means a commitment NOT to bring the subject up to others or to oneself, and when it arises spontaneously, to turn it aside with a firm "That's dealt with," not even allowing oneself to rehearse the incident in memory.

Quoting from Dan Hamilton's excellent InterVarsity pamphlet *Forgiveness*: "Once upon a time, I was engaged to a young woman who changed her mind. I forgave her, but I could not send away my emotions in one single moment of decision and effort. That was done in small sums over a year, whenever I spoke with her and refrained from rehashing the past. Done whenever I saw her with another man. Done when I had to renounce jealousy and self-pity, when I prayed for her as she moved into other relationships. Done when I praised her and spoke of her value, through I wanted to slice away at her reputation. Those were the payments — but she never saw them."

WHAT CAN CHRISTIANS LEARN FROM MARTIN AND MALCOLM?

Come find out! Redeemer's Racial Unity Ministry (R.U.M.) will sponsor an informal dialogue discussing the lives and contributions of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X.

Two Christian scholars, Dr. Dean Trulear, Professor of Church and Society at New York Theological Seminary and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship Board member, and Dr. Louis DeCaro, author of *On the Side of My People: A Religious Life of Malcolm X* (NYU Press), will share the

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"I am not a racist in any way, shape, or form, and I believe in taking an uncompromising stand against any forms of segregation and discrimination that are based on race. I myself do not judge a man by the color of his skin. The yardstick that I use to judge a man is his deeds, his behavior, his intentions."

-Malcolm X

unique perspectives of these two men and what Christians can learn from both.

Please join us for the R.U.M.'s first "1997 Dialogue" as we celebrate Christian unity and Dr. King's birthday (we'll provide the cake!) on Wednesday, January 22, 1997, from 7 to 9 pm at All Angels Church, 251 W. 80th (between Broadway and West End). For more information, call Andrea Clark 718-721-5376 or Yvonne Dodd 212-808-4460 ext. 22.

"The majority of white Americans consider themselves sincerely committed to justice for the Negro... But unfortunately this is a fantasy of self-deception and comfortable vanity. Overwhelmingly America is still struggling with irresolution and contradictions."

-Dr. King

NEW GOSPEL CHOIR BEGINS

A new choral group specializing in the singing of traditional spirituals will begin at Redeemer this January. The group is open to all — no audition required — and involves a commitment of only a few weeks rehearsal and performing at least at one of the services. The Gospel Choir will be conducted by John Bigham, and will sing several times a year at worship services and other events.

Since this group will be very similar to many of the other choral societies in New York, it would be a perfect place to bring your non-Christian or church-shy friends who are interested in singing. Fellowship and friendship will be our goals as well as high quality music.

Interested in getting involved? Call Tom Jennings or Annie Mintun in the music office, 808-4460, ext. 25, to sign up.

NEW LOCATION FOR SOFL
The School of Servant Leadership will meet Saturday, January 4, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m at a new location, the Williams Club, 24 East 39th Street (Off Madison).