

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

APRIL 1997

The seventh core value of Redeemer has to do with the relationship of Christianity to our vocations and careers.

THE GOSPEL AND OUR VOCATIONS

BY TIM KELLER

Two theological principles:

All our work matters to God.

We agree with the original Protestant Reformers that so called “secular” work is as valuable and God-honoring as Christian ministry. When you use your gifts in work — whether by making clothes, practicing law, tilling the field, mending broken bodies, or nurturing children — you are answering God’s calling to serve the human community. Our work then, whatever it is, matters greatly to God.

On the other hand, God matters to all our work.

That is, we also believe that the gospel shapes and affects the motives, manner, and methods we use in our work. What then is our vision? We do not want Christians to privatize their faith in a way that creates a chasm between their faith and their work, nor to express it terms of a sub-culture. Rather we want to see growing Christians working in their vocations with both excellence and Christian distinctiveness, thus transforming the

culture in which we live from the inside out.

The Negative — what we do not want.

When Christians “privatize” their faith, that means that they leave it at home, along with the rest of their personal and private commitments, and enter their workplace with what they think is a secular mindset. However, all human practice is grounded in adopting a particular view of God and humanity and right and wrong. “*There is hardly any human action,*” wrote de Tocqueville, “*that does not originate in some...idea of the Deity, his relationship to mankind, of the nature of their own souls, of their duty to fellow creatures.*” Failure to think through the implications of their faith for their work therefore will not mean that one will have a “business” or a “secular” mindset at work, but rather a mindset which is grounded in a non-Christian, but ultimately still religious view of the world.

We also do not want Christians expressing their faith through a

“sub-culture”. Today Christians often create their own popular music, their own media, their own fiction, their own entertainment which superficially has Christian content, but at its heart only mimics the consumerist and self-centered dominant culture. And, to be frank, the work (the art, writing, journalism, etc.) involved in sub-culture activities is usually mediocre or poor. Instead of being sub-cultural, we would rather see Christians become counter-cultural. A counter-cultural Christian moves out into the secular world, competing with non-Christians, to produce material characterized both by excellence and and by a Christian worldview.

Worldview and our work

One example of this distinction was the recent furor over the televising of *Schindler’s List*. This movie shows evidence of some important Biblical themes. On the one hand, it explodes old notions of humanity’s basic goodness by showing us what evil we are capable of. On the

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REDEEMER SUFFERS \$30,000 THEFT OF MARCH 9 OFFERING

The checks from the March 9 morning offering were stolen. Since Redeemer has no endowment or capital fund, our ministry relies solely on its weekly offering contributions to pay our bills and support our ministries. Therefore, we would greatly appreciate it if you would re-submit your donation if you gave in check form at the March 9

morning offering. (Of course, if you didn’t give at that offering, but want to help us by giving now, we will also warmly receive your gift!)

The good news is that we had already stamped the stolen checks “For Deposit Only,” so our bank tells us that they cannot be cashed. If you gave at that service, please consider your check void. However, if you wish you can put a hold

on your former check before re-issuing it to Redeemer. Additionally, it would help if you would inform us if your funds from the stolen check are (somehow) withdrawn so that we can help police.

If you have information or questions concerning this theft, you may call the office at 808-4460 and speak to Drew Field at extension 18.



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other hand, it shows the surprising power of grace which advances through repentance in the life of Schindler, a man of extremely unpromising moral raw material.

But broadcasting the profanity and nudity which were inherent in the story (and therefore important to the realism of the story) bothered some people, and an evangelical congressman took the occasion to denounce this as another step in the moral disintegration of our society. He overlooked the substantial Biblical world-view themes advanced (perhaps unconsciously) by the movie, and focused completely on matters of form.

Would he have been happier with the Walt Disney movies of the mid-20th century that in form were free of profanity and nudity, yet at heart pushed a highly sentimental and humanistic worldview in which grace was either unnecessary or irrelevant? On the other hand, most movies which are filled with the f-word and nudity are just as much depicting a secular universe devoid of moral consequences and redemption — which is just as unreal a world as the Disney fare.

The Christian worldview is both far more pessimistic (because of its doctrine of sin) and far more optimistic (because of its doctrine of grace) than either the older moralistic humanism (of Disney) and the newer relativistic post-modernism (of say, *Pulp Fiction*). The gospel does not share the sentimentality of the older views or the nihilism of the newer views. So many Christians, like the congressman, are oblivious to these distinctions, obsessing on bringing back an era of moral niceness instead of bringing the gospel to bear so as to

shape our work in new ways.

The Positive — what we want.

We want Christians who are dedicated to their work, yet growing in grace. Is this too obvious? No. Churches often explicitly or implicitly demand that for Christians to really “serve the Lord”, they should be spending 10-plus hours a week in church ministry — on committees, leading small groups, teaching Sunday School, and so on. But to do very well in a profession (to a degree that you are having an impact on our society) requires a certain amount of immersion in your field. Churches are not supportive of this, and they do not consider how to design creative “delivery systems” that get theological teaching, accountability, spiritual support and nurture to busy professionals.

Furthermore, the discipleship and spiritual nurture that churches do provide are not very oriented to the spiritual issues (ethical quandaries, temptations, discouragements, opportunities) peculiar to a Christian in a particular profession. As a result, believers who do become prominent in their fields are often too weak and immature as Christians to have any real influence for the kingdom. There is a tremendous need for prayer, support, spiritual nurture and counsel among Christians within particular professions.

We want Christians who are working with excellence. While there are some deliberate efforts to band people together within professions for “vocation-specific” spiritual nurture, there are fewer intentional efforts at actual cooperation among Christians in a partic-

ular field to accomplish their work. One exception to this generalization is in the field of philosophy. Over the last 20 years, there has been a surprising and remarkable flourishing of Christians in philosophy. A major professional association was formed and a highly respected journal established to help Christians do world-class work in philosophy. As a result Christians are stirring that entire field. But in virtually every other profession, there is a need for Christian professional associations and for thousands of practical and cooperative efforts in which Christians mentor each other, “open doors” for each other, spur each other on, and do their actual work together.

We want Christians who are working with Christian distinctiveness. Besides spiritual nurture and cooperative ventures, there is a tremendous need to do the hard thinking, discussion and “theoretical” work that answers the question: “how does Christianity actually shape and influence the work we do? how will it be different than the work of non-Christians?”

As we noted above, the Christian world-view differs not only from the obvious secularism of much of our contemporary society, but also from the “traditional values” of many modern and ancient cultures. How do the Bible and the gospel give us resources and guidance for our work? There are even fewer efforts at this important project than there are in the areas of nurture and cooperation.

The task ahead

The way to do cultural transformation is not so much through affecting government policies as

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REDEEMER REPORT

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Redeemer meets Sunday at
HUNTER COLLEGE AUDITORIUM • EAST 69TH BETWEEN PARK AND LEXINGTON
services at 10:30 • 6:00

Golf-a-thon May 2

The Midtown Pregnancy Support Center is sponsoring its Second Annual Golf-a-thon on Friday, May 2nd at High Mountain Golf Course in Franklin Lakes, NJ, minutes from GW Bridge. Two rounds of golf (36 holes) will be followed by a bar-be-que and prizes, all for a good cause. The MPSC provides Christian peer counseling and support for women facing unplanned pregnancies or post-abortion grief. Sponsors can be on a per-hole basis or by making an individual contribution. Minimum sponsorship total must be \$500; space is limited. Call the Center at 212/986-9767 for a sign-up sheet or pick one up at the Redeemer info table.

Can't We All Just Get Along?

We wish it were that simple. But those of us working for racial unity in the body of Christ know cross cultural relationships aren't always easy. That's why Redeemer's Racial Unity Ministry (R.U.M.) is sponsoring a special new class in the School of Discipleship. "Principles for Racial Unity" will be offered May 4-June 9 after both services, and will cover practical, biblical principles for building and maintaining cross cultural relationships. In the process, we will also examine Christ's relationship with culture. This interactive workshop will include guest speakers, lots of scripture study and resources, and plenty of time for questions and prayer. Call Jo Kadlecek at 212-831-7234 or Andrea Clark at 212-808-0083 for more details on the class or on the Racial Unity Ministry.

First Annual Report In the Works

Redeemer's first Annual Report is currently being prepared and will be sent to all members this Spring soon as it is complete. Our outside accounting firm is currently completing its annual review and audit of our financial condition. Non-members can request a copy of the Annual Report by calling the office and leaving a message with the receptionist.

April 14 Songwriter's Fellowship Workshop

This month's Musicians' Fellowship will be a gathering of Redeemer songwriters and others who are interested in the craft of songwriting. The program will feature a panel of professionals with expertise in various aspects of the business. A time of song critique will be followed by a questions and answers. Panelists will also discuss how their faith impacts their work. Contact Annie at 808-4460 ext. 25 for requirements (the deadline is April 7.) A few will be chosen for their instructional value. All are welcome to attend!

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much as to do our work in ways that show the world a vision of what life would look like under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. To do that, we will need to support Christians in their work by providing venues for a) vocation-specific spiritual nurture, b) cooperative work production, and c) theological integration. It is hard for any one set of leaders to cover all three bases, because it takes pastoral gifts, entrepreneurial gifts and intellectual gifts, and seldom are these interests combined in any

one person. Another problem that there are so few models around for churches who wish to do this kind of ministry. It is Redeemer's intention to become one of those churches that pioneers this important work.

We by no means feel that we are anywhere near achieving this, but it remains one of our core values because we recognize the necessity of coming to grips with these issues if we are to be a servant to the community to which we are called.

DIVORCE AND SEPARATION SEMINAR MAY 10

The pain of marital separation and divorce is among the worst that people can suffer. As with other disasters, God offers hope and grace to people who are struggling with those problems. Redeemer is sponsoring a morning seminar on this subject on May 10 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Norwegian Seamen's Church, 317 E. 50th Street (between First and Second Avenues). Registration is \$15 and will cover refreshments, materials and the hall rental. Tim Pettit, director of church life at Redeemer, will speak on what the Bible says about divorce and then have a question and answer period.

This is a wonderful opportunity to invite your friends who are skeptical about whether the church or Christianity has anything meaningful or hopeful to say to people who have gone through the pain of divorce. You can register for the seminar in the East Lounge at Hunter College after the worship services on April 13, 20 and 27. Or you can register with the receptionist at 808-4460 x10 and then pay at the door.

IMPORTANT TAX INFORMATION FOR STOCK DONORS

According to recent articles, a tax break for donors of stock expires on May 31, 1997. The current law allows stock donors to deduct the full market value of donated stock. Beginning June 1, donors will only be allowed to deduct the value that they paid for the stock. Many non-profit groups and churches are seeking renewal of the tax break since it has such a profound effect on the value of donations. President Clinton has recommended renewing the tax break in his Fiscal 1998 Budget before Congress. As of press time, we do not know whether the renewal will retroactively take place.

What should you do? The safest option, of course, is to donate any stock that you had planned on giving before the May 31 deadline. Another option is to wait until the government approves its new budget.

"There will also be small group discussions on topics such as divorce's effect on children; the stages a divorced person goes through; and how to grant forgiveness."

OPEN FORUM APRIL 27

The last Open Forum this spring will be held at Hunter College auditorium on Sunday evening, April 27, at 6:00 p.m. in lieu of our regular Sunday evening worship service. As always, the Open Forum will begin with a musical introduction of the night's topic, followed by a lecture by Tim Keller and concluding with an open microphone Question and Answer Session.

The theme for the evening will be "Friends — What Good Are They?" and will feature a program of new jazz compositions by Redeemer's own *6:30 band* as well as dramatic monologues. The *6:30 band* has performed at Redeemer's evening worship services since 1990 and has created over one hundred original arrangements of hymn tunes, as well as composing new settings for many classic hymn texts. The group released a CD, *Open My Eyes*, in 1994 and has performed at churches and concert venues throughout the east coast. Individual members of the band are well known professionals in the New York, national and international music worlds.

As always, this Open Forum will provide an excellent opportunity for you to invite friends who are skeptical of the claims of the Christian faith.

Arrive early, as the crowds are always large at Open Forums.