

# REDEEMER

R E P O R T

MAY 2000

## A PRAYER LIFE THAT NOURISHES YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD

BY TIM KELLER

*The richness of my experience of God in prayer only occurs in the midst of much time set aside to be with him.*

Every year I look forward to the slower pace of the summer months because of the opportunity it gives me to re-invigorate my prayer life. It's not that I don't pray during the year, but rarely, in the press of hectic scheduling, am I able to consistently devote the hours necessary to reawaken the intimacy with God that not only I crave, but which is my only defense against burnout.

Just as the old discussion of quality time versus quantity time with your family is a red herring (there IS no quality time, except that which occurs in the midst of a large quantity of time), so with God. The richness of my experience of God in prayer only occurs in the midst of much time set aside

to be with him. That said, there are several other things I do which might be helpful to some of you who also will have increased flexibility of time in the coming months, and who want to connect with God in a deeper way.

The main way I do this is to seek an increase in the amount of my meditation. It is no accident that the first two Psalms in the Psalter are not prayers *per se*, but rather meditations. In fact the very first Psalm, the doorway into the prayer book of the Bible, is a meditation on meditation. Why? We are being taught that while it is certainly possible for deep experiences of the presence and power of God to happen in innumerable ways, the ordinary way for 'going deeper' spiri-

tually is through meditation. It is in meditation that we get into deeper self-surrender, then into higher, clearer faith-sights of his beauty, and finally into powerful, dynamic prayer for the world.

### *What is meditation?*

In most Protestant traditions, the 'personal devotional' life consists of two parts: Bible study and prayer. But meditation is neither and both. The Puritan Richard Baxter wrote: "Solemn or stated meditation is distinguished from the study of the word, wherein our principle aim is to learn the truth; and also from prayer, whereof God himself is the immediate object. But meditation is

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## REDEEMER'S MOM'S GROUP

Mom's Group — the name is not catchy, but these family-focused Home Fellowship Groups are a big draw! Composed chiefly of mothers with babies and toddlers — but open to all mothers — they meet midday for Bible study, prayer, wisdom-sharing, and often a shoulder on which to cry tears of frustration!

The first Redeemer Mom's Group began in 1991 with the leadership of Rebecca White, Marina Slayton, and Kate Wheatley — all at home with babies after enjoying interesting careers. A whole new ball game, shall we say! Their main purpose was fellowship and support for the challenging new role of full-time parenting. All An-

gels Episcopal Church generously opened their doors to host the group, and some of their moms participated, too. (That warm partnership supporting families of both churches exists to this day.)

In addition to the weekly small groups, the moms support one another in a variety of common needs, such as meals and childcare at the birth of a baby. They have hosted Christmas outreach coffees to invite neighbors, and celebrate special occasions or just ordinary

Wednesdays with an occasional "Mom's Night Out" dinner.

As families have multiplied at Redeemer, the Mom's Groups have popped up in new corners — Eastside, Westside, Queens, Roosevelt Island, Washington Heights, and New Jersey. New women are welcome anytime! Childcare is provided, of course. For the location of the group nearest you, or for more information, call Carole Kleinknecht, 212-751-9822.

### INSIDE:

- WOMEN'S CONNECTION - MAY 21
- "LOVE IN THE CITY" RETREAT
- PREMARITAL SEMINAR - JUNE 10
- 4TH OF JULY GETAWAY

*MORE...*



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## A PRAYER LIFE THAT NOURISHES. . .

the affecting of our own hearts and minds with love, delight, and humility toward the things contained [in the Word].”

An example of meditation is found in Psalm 103:1-2: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.” Notice that this is not the same thing as prayer. He is not speaking directly to God, though it is clear that David is extremely aware of being in the presence of God. The object of the meditation is his own heart. David is ‘talking to himself’—to his soul. But the subject of the meditation is truth about God—“forget not all his benefits.”

Obviously, David has not intellectually forgotten that God has forgiven his sins, redeemed his life, and so on (Ps.103:2ff.) Rather, he is taking Biblical truths and driving them into his own heart until it is affected, delighted, and changed by them. Peter Toon has written that meditation is the descent of the mind with Biblical truth into the inmost heart until the whole being yearns for God.

The kind of meditation we see in the Psalms is neither the anti-rational ‘spirituality’ of New Age religion, nor is it the over-rational ‘spirituality’ of much modern evangelical religion. On the one hand, New Age religion takes its cues from Eastern philosophy and thinks of meditation as a calm, serene emptying of the mind of all rational thought. David’s meditation, however, is furiously rational. “Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted

within me?” he says in Psalm 42, literally arguing and reasoning with his heart. On the other hand, much evangelical religion is afraid of any mystical, experiential element. It conceives of a ‘devotional life’ as only the study of the Bible and then prayer for the strength to practice it. David’s meditation,

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however, is deeply mystical. “One thing I seek — to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord” (Ps.27:4). He is looking for a transformation of the affections of his heart as he prays.

Jonathan Edwards speaks of this very thing in his own practice of meditation. “In reading [the Scripture] I seemed often to see so much light, that I could not get along in reading — almost every sentence seemed to be full of wonders...I...found, from time to time, an inward sweetness, that used, as it were, to carry me away in my contemplations. I felt alone... sweetly conversing with Christ, and wrapped and swallowed up in God. The sense I had of divine things, would often of a sudden as

it were, kindle up a sweet burning in my heart; an ardor of my soul, that I know not how to express...” Notice how his meditation (“contemplations”) on the Word led into a deep sense of intimacy in prayer. That is why a Psalm on meditation begins the Biblical book on prayer.

### **How to meditate**

Of course, the best way to learn to do anything is to watch a “master” at work. If you read Psalms 1, 42, 77, 103, and 119 you get this very thing. However, we all need to begin as beginners. There is no better ‘Beginner’s Guide to Meditation’ than the model that Martin Luther gave in his letter “A Simple Way to Pray” written to his barber, Peter Beskendorf, in 1535. Luther directed that we should “warm the heart up” through meditation before we prayed. Based on Luther’s insights, I use the following outline for a short (30 minutes or less) time of Bible reading, meditation, and prayer. After reading a portion of the Bible slowly, and choosing one or two things or insights that especially helped me, I take each insight and ask the following questions:

1. Adoration - How can I love and praise God on the basis of this? What do I see here that I can praise him for?

2. Repentance - How do I fail to realize this in my life? What wrong behavior, harmful emotions or attitudes result when I forget this?

3. Gospel Thanks - How can I thank Jesus as the ultimate revelation of this attribute of God (#1) and the ultimate answer to this sin or need of mine (#2)?

4. Aspiration- How does this

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### **REDEEMER REPORT**

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

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services at 5:00

## "LOVE IN THE CITY" IN-TOWN RETREAT JUNE 3

**W**hy is New York so full of gifted, attractive, and often lonely people? What is it about our culture that works against strong and lasting friendships, especially between men and women? How can we build better relationships with people? Why is community so important and why do broken relationships hurt so much? Why is it so hard sometimes for married folks to get along?

Charlie and Jeannie Drew will address these questions at a day-long, in-town retreat entitled "Love in the City." Q and A, small group discussion, and a time for private reflection will

surround a series of talks.

The retreat will run from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 a.m. on June 3 at the American Bible Society, 1865 Broadway at W. 61st Street and a continental breakfast will be served. There will be a \$10 admission fee to cover the cost of the hall and refreshments.

The Drews have been married twenty-eight years and have two college-aged children. Charlie serves as an associate pastor at Redeemer and Jeannie chairs the Science Department at the Riverdale Country School in the north Bronx.

You must register by calling the church receptionist at 808-4460 x110.

## WOMEN'S CONNECTION

BY DEBBIE CHRISTENSEN

**O**ur second Redeemer's Women's Connection was a great time together, as we heard from Lois Kehlenbrink and Kay Cain. They both spoke about how they had been affected by abuse, and how their true identity came from being women who looked to God as their source of dignity.

The next Women's Connection is going to be May 21, in Hunter Auditorium from 2:00 -4:00 p.m. with Dr. Ann Woo-Ming speaking. Ann will be talking about the basics of depression, including the symptoms, possible causes, and ways it can be addressed.

The Christian, psychological and physical perspectives will be integrated, since all are aspects of a person created in the image of God. She will also include a case example using a fictional case composed of various real-life situations. We will be able to save some time for questions for Ann.

Dr. Woo-Ming is a Christian psychiatrist, specializing in women's issues, who works in collaboration with the Redeemer Counseling Center.

Remember if you go to the Eastside, Westside, Morning or Night Service, you are welcome to come and bring a friend.

*Interesting,  
Supportive,  
Personal—  
The next  
Women's  
Connection  
is going to  
be  
May 21...*

## PRE-MARITAL SEMINAR ON JUNE 10

**I**f you are giving even preliminary thought to getting married, you'll want to attend our next Pre-marital Seminar on Saturday, June 10, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The seminar is held at the church office, 271 Madison Ave., between 39th and 40th, on the 15th Floor. The cost is \$25 per couple (for materials) and refreshments will be served.

The seminar is a pre-requisite for couples who want a Redeemer pastor to marry them. It is also an effective diagnostic tool for couples who are just beginning to talk about the possibility of marriage.

You must pre-register by calling the church receptionist, 808-4460 x110.

## CHURCH FAMILY UPDATE

### **Vows:**

Eileen Sung Su Buck  
Dorothy Gyger  
Beverly Sue Josephs  
Yvette Althea Knight  
Richard L. Murphy  
Wendelyne C.H. Murphy  
Andy K. Suh  
Esther Sung Suh  
Jitendra B. Pradhan  
Joe Yan  
Rebekka Kehlenbrink

### **Baptisms:**

Annerose Mary Regina Metaxas,  
daughter of Susanne & Eric  
Madison Trombly Burmeister,  
daughter of Kimberly & James  
Matthew Youngmin, son of  
Esther & Andrew  
James Patrick Ackerman, son of  
Elizabeth & Jay  
Luca Sebastian Magnani, son of  
Kristen & Ian  
Allen Carter Hinckley, III, son of  
Rim & Carter

### **Baptisms (continued):**

Sophia Claire Ruberti, daughter  
of Ted & Anna  
Jonathan Ray Little, son of Mimi  
& Joseph  
Ian Timothy Pradhan, son of  
Beth & Jiten

### **Adult Baptism**

Rebekka Kehlenbrink

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## A PRAYER LIFE THAT NOURISHES. . .

show me what I should or can be and do? How would I be different if this truth were powerfully real to me?

After I have thought out and at least sketchily written out answers to each question, then I proceed to pray my praises, confessions, and supplications to God directly. Often, as you are meditating, or as you are praying, you may feel your heart warm or even melt with a spiritual sense of the reality of God. Sometimes, of course, nothing happens at all! And very rarely, you can have life-changing experiences of the presence of God that you never forget. The number and power of these encounters are completely out of your control. The Spirit blows wherever he pleases (Jn 3:8). But it has only been with the practice of meditation that my own experience of God's reality has become at all regular and progressively deeper.

*"Blessed is the man [whose] delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night."  
(Psalm 1:1,3)*

## START SAVING FOR THE 4TH OF JULY!

**S**tart saving your money now so that you can sign up for a weekend of canoeing, inner-tubing, hiking, biking and fire-works at our fourth annual 4th of July Getaway to the mountains of Vermont.

The trip will begin Saturday, July 1 and we will return to the city on Tuesday afternoon, July 4. Three-nights' lodging, eight full meals, a canoe trip and a mountain cookout & bonfire will cost approximately \$165 to \$215, depending on your room selection.

Redeemer's weekend Getaways are a powerful way to make new friends, even if you've just started attending Redeemer. We're staying at the Hotel Coolidge in White River Junction, an antique hotel whose intimate size allows us to virtually take it over. The 4th of July weekend will offer times of worship and teaching, in addition to a variety of outdoor activities.

Beginning May 7, you may register online at [www.RedeemerChurchLife.com](http://www.RedeemerChurchLife.com) or call Tim Pettit, director of Church Life, at 808-4460 x141.

## METRO NY PRESBYTERY WOMEN TO HOLD RETREAT MAY 6

The Metropolitan New York Presbytery Women's One-Day Retreat will be held on Saturday, May 6, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Sheraton Meadowlands Hotel. The cost for this one day retreat is \$40. The theme for the day is "Living Faith for Living Life." Sharon Betters, a well-known author, will be the speaker. There are a group of women going from Redeemer so you are welcome to join us. For more information call Joanne Morales at 718-472-3286.

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## GROUP LEADER TRAINING SEMINAR MAY 6

The next Fellowship Group Leader's Training is Saturday, May 6, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the church office. If you're interested in becoming a group leader you can find out everything you need to know at this seminar. Pre-register at 808-4460 x110.