

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

JUNE 2002

HAVING IT ALL OR HAVING THE BEST?

BY DR. TUCK BARTHOLOMEW

“...the technological advances we rely upon hold out hope for a better life,” (but) they have not, by and large, delivered.”

Novelist Walker Percy once said the defining characteristic of modern life is disappointment. A sweeping statement, but his point is that although the technological advances we rely upon hold out hope for a “better life,” they have not, by and large, delivered. In a sense, modern aspirations have backed us into a corner—but it was spiritually empty.

Increasingly, our culture seems to be waking up to that emptiness. The quest for spiritual discovery often takes shape when old bridges to fulfillment collapse. One afternoon about a year ago I shook my fist at productivity and engaged in some mindless chan-

nel surfing. Oprah caught my attention with a segment on people who’d given up everything in order to live the “best life.” Her guests had done “whatever it took” to recover a sense of life. They were “improving their spirit.”

There was the woman who’d lost 200 pounds, climbed Kilimanjaro, then buried a picture of her former self at the summit. Another woman left her husband for a year. She had lived most of her adult life pleasing her husband and children, so when the kids left for college and her husband accepted a job transfer, she set off to find herself at the family home on Cape Cod.

And there was a man who, at age 50 (midlife turning point, he said), bought a mountain home, left his wife and sought to rediscover himself through solitude (if I remember correctly, he took his dog.) Each, in different but similar ways, tried to make life work through rediscovering the “true self.”

Interestingly, Jesus said that to discover the real you, you must lose yourself and follow him. Oprah’s guests had lost themselves to a point—they gave up an old approach to life, but not their ability to find “real life” themselves. As long as we are at the center of our quest, it’s not
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WANT TO GET ENGAGED?

BY CREGAN COOKE, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATION

“...Redeemer has made significant changes to upgrade the capabilities of the website to provide information and material that keeps you connected.”

No, not to another person, to what’s going on at Redeemer. To some of you the Redeemer website, like engagement, is still undiscovered territory, or at the least www.redeemer.com is probably not yet on the favorites list of your web browser. Although you don’t need quite the same level of commitment, if you have access to a computer/internet, we want you to be fully engaged with redeemer.com.

In the past two years Redeemer has made significant changes to upgrade the website to provide information and material that keeps you connected and up to date with what’s happening in our church com-

munity. For example, did you know that you can now preview a short 6 minute version of the Redeemer Vision Video on the front page of the site? Work has also begun to provide video of MCM talks to go with the handouts already available.

Maybe you’ve been meaning to sign up for the next all-day membership class. You can do it on line. Or do you need to read through the handout for your next fellowship group meeting? FG leaders can download it from

the study materials section. Maybe you’ve wanted to buy a sermon tape and looked at the line at the tape table on Sunday and it was too long for you. Now you can buy your sermon tapes or MP3s on line. If you want a copy of the latest classifieds or want to post an ad in it, you can do it on line. Say you want to find an old article from a Redeemer newsletter; all the newsletters back to June 1996 are archived and available in the
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- CHANGING FACES OF HFNY
- MEASURES FOR EXTREME NEEDS
- “DEAR VERN”

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HAVING IT ALL OR HAVING THE BEST?

spiritual life we are really after. **The reason so many people rarely attain “spirituality” is we make spirituality about us.**

Jesus shows us that our deepest problem is not our struggle in career, marriage or singleness, health or any other desire *per se*, our deepest problem is that something other than him is at the center of things. Until we come to him as our defining center, we can't get on with the business of living – really living.

The Gospel of Mark tells of a man who came to Jesus asking about eternal life. The man had worldly wealth and he was impeccably moral. But, like those on Oprah, something wasn't working for him. The problem was that this man, who had a great deal of earthly success, didn't have everything. He wasn't sure he had a life that would last. It turns out he didn't. He was missing one thing, Jesus told him. And the missing piece would not come easily — it would require him to lose his life and follow Jesus.

Here is a test for Christians and, really, for anyone who is curious about Christianity: Does the message of the gospel shake you up? If our core problem is that we try to live life apart from God, then Jesus' message will shake us up.

Another problem we have is we want to believe we can have it all — that we can come to Jesus without giving up anything. We want to believe, according to writer Anne Lamott, that we can have our “true authentic healed whole self and the cool car,” and “an awareness of the eternal **now**

“Here is a test for Christians and, really, for anyone who is curious about Christianity: Does the message of the gospel shake you up? If our core problem is that we try to live life apart from God, then Jesus' message will shake us up.”

and the buns of steel.” Real life — a spiritual life — comes only to those who “face a benevolent annihilation, without all the stuff you think defines you.... Because you have to give up some false stuff to get to the true.” The man in Mark's story couldn't let go of what he believed brought him life: his agenda.

Mark tells us Jesus loved the man as he spoke to him. I don't know exactly what that looked like, but I suspect Mark is letting us know Jesus gave the man a taste of the life he sought. But such life is costly – to us and to Jesus. And though the man gets a taste of a new treasure, his heart's other treasure held fast. He didn't see that “to climb the mountain with Jesus is,” as Eugene Peterson says, “to come upon beauty that takes your breath away.”

We are a lot like this man: we linger around Jesus — but on the brink of disappointment. Jesus' request seems so extreme. Surely he's not asking me to do the same thing? But he is. He asks us to lay down our lives ... and follow him. He wants us to give up our attachment, dependence, hope in whatever it is that steals God's place in our lives. For this man it was wealth, but it may just as well have been something

else. We all have some kind of wealth we are reluctant to give up.

It's worth noting that the interchange between Jesus and this wealthy man shook the disciples. If this man doesn't have life — can anyone? Again, Jesus redirects us to a deeper hope: with God all things are possible. Salvation, the kind of life he comes to bring, is possible.

New York is a city of extremes. Our family has been here seven short months, but it feels longer! And we are learning what many of you already know about the commingling of the city's greatness and hardness. Living here exposes extremes inside us, as well, exposes a depth to our struggle with Jesus that, frankly, is more easily overlooked when you don't live in extreme places. The likelihood that our functional hopes and idols will fall flat at any given time are actually very good!

When the worlds we inhabit stop working for us, stop producing the goods, what do we do? It's not enough to get away from it all — to retreat. The only way we will enter real life is to lose our lives and follow Jesus. Is there room in your life for real spirituality? For true beauty that takes your breath away?

REDEEMER REPORT

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The Redeemer Report is a publication of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church.
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HUNTER COLLEGE AUDITORIUM
EAST 69TH BETWEEN PARK AND LEXINGTON
services at 9:30 • 11:15 • 6:00

CHURCH OF ST. PAUL AND ST. ANDREW
86TH AND WEST END AVENUE
services at 7:00

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GET ENGAGED?

newsletter section. Or maybe you just want to know what's going on this week — the same Bulletin Board that's in your Sunday worship program is there, too.

In the near future there are plans to provide these additional web resources: supplemental training materials for several ministries, a church plant location map and a fellowship group location map. As we continue to develop the website, it will become a more vital part of how Redeemer communicates. Take a few minutes and explore what's there and consider getting engaged.

Dear Vern...

Dear Vern, a new regular column, is intended to answer your most practical questions about Redeemer. The answers are intended to be helpful and humorous but NOT theological. Please submit your questions to dearvern@earthlink.net. Redeemer reserves the right to answer your questions in the most direct and/or off the wall way it sees fit. No math or science questions please!

Dear Vern,

Last Sunday, I was hit in the back of the head by a cell phone. It came from someone's backpack as they fell getting into their seat in the back row. I didn't think much of it until the cell phone rang just as I was answering an email on my Blackberry. I have a great idea, have we ever considered adding telephones to the back of the seats' headrests and a plug-in for my laptop? This would broaden our worship experience.

Quietly, Tom

Dear Tom,

At Redeemer, we keep up with current trends. Rumor has it a 6th flavor of mini muffin will be on the menu soon! Since I'm only the advice column guy, I can't install electrical outlets and phones in the headrests. I'll say this — if you insist on keeping your phone, pager, pda, food processor, and laptop on during the service, please sit in the baby crying room on the balcony level or in the nursery. The noises will drown out the babies crying and the babies will have more toys to play with.

No regrets, Vern

THE CHANGING FACES OF HOPE FOR NY

Our volunteers are the "faces" of Hope for New York. They are the people who donate thousands of hours to pregnant women, children, teens, homeless and the elderly. They serve food, sort clothing, lead Bible classes, build low-cost homes, renovate, escort children to sports and cultural events and teach job skills classes. Most significantly, they experience transformation in their own lives through serving.

The staff at Hope for New York exists to serve our volunteers and our own faces have changed! Please allow us to introduce ourselves.

Mike O'Neill, Executive Director

Mike joined HFNY in Sept., 2001. Before joining, Mike worked as the Executive Director of Kids With a Promise, one of our affiliate ministries meeting

the needs of the inner-city children. He and his wife, Donna, reside in the Bronx and are expecting their first child in September.

Joe Ricci, Volunteer Manager

Joe is the most recent addition to HFNY. He joined the staff in March, 2002, after having worked as Redeemer's office manager. Joe and his wife, Connie, have three children and live in Washington Heights.

Deborah C. Lieu, Office Manager

Deborah joined the staff in Nov., 2001, to help us coordinate our 9/11 related activities. Formerly an investment banker with Merrill Lynch and FAC/Equities, Deborah hopes to utilize her skills in assisting and building up God's ministries. Recently married, Deborah and her husband, Steve, reside in Connecticut.

HOPE FOR NEW YORK SAYS "THANKS!"

Hope for New York wishes to thank the Redeemer congregation for its generosity expressed during the Easter Sacrificial Offering. Approximately \$130,000 was raised to support mercy and justice work in New York City. Additionally, Hope for New York volunteers contributed 43,353 hours at our various affiliate ministries in 2001, an increase of 74% over last year!

We thank God for your generous contribution and encourage you to learn more about us. Simply log onto www.hfny.org or contact our Volunteer Manager, Joe Ricci, at joe@hfny.org.

NEW OFFICERS INSTALLED IN MAY

Please welcome the following new officers to the Diaconate and Session.

Elder:

Douglas Turner

Deacon:

Thomas Becker
Greg Fendler
Harvey Liu
Marc Murray
Josh McCormack
Stan Park

Deaconess:

Melissa Chang
Sunny Choe
Laura Grooms
Valerie McCormack
Bobbie Turner
Suzy Ulrich
Theresa Yeh

“EXTREME MEASURES FOR EXTREME NEEDS”

BY JAMES LEONARD, ASST. DIR. OF CHURCH LIFE

What on earth would cause a team of Redeemerites to spend several hours a week lifting weights, refining their diets, riding up and down steep hills, pedaling great distances, and striving to raise \$30,000? And if that isn't enough, tack on a grueling 300+-mile bike ride over the course of four days in the heat of summer. Whatever the reason, it would have to be a pretty good one.

Ever since Redeemer Church Life launched its newest ministry, “Redeemer Extremer,” all sorts of avid x-sports enthusiasts have jumped, dived or, in this case, pedaled into action with a passion to build community in an extreme way.

The first “North-East Charities Ride” is no exception. This four-day, 300+ mile benefit ride for Pancreatic Cancer and AIDS Vaccination Research is scheduled to commence on August 29, 2002. Although it will require a lot of blood, sweat and tears (well, hopefully not blood), it's bound to be a life changing experience —

but it's certainly not for the faint of heart. Let's face it, very few good things come without some degree of sweat and tears, and experience shows that people are more likely to bond together in the midst of stress and challenge.

Andre Solomon, one of the founders of the “North-East Charities Ride,” says training for and participating in a similar charity ride several years ago was one of the most challenging endeavors he'd ever taken on. He says he never would have made it through the ride had it not been for the support and encouragement of fellow riders. “Never in my life had I experienced such love and encouragement. In fact, it's safe to say that this was a major step in my journey toward becoming a Christian.”

In the last 20 years, AIDS has killed over 438,000 people in the United States alone. Around the world, the situation is catastrophic. It is estimated that 75 million adults and children will die of AIDS in the next 20 years in the absence of a vaccine — the worst

human catastrophe the earth has ever known. Pancreatic cancer accounts for just 2% of all newly diagnosed cancers in the U.S. each year, but represents 5% of all cancer deaths. Pancreatic cancer is often far advanced by the time symptoms occur and the diagnosis is established. As indicated by five-year survival rates, successful treatment is rare.

Redeemer Extremer's First “North-East Charities Ride” will provide an opportunity to address these needs first hand. If you are interested in participating, call me (James Leonard) at the church office (212-808-4460 ext. 123 or james@redeemer.com.)

But if riding more than 300 miles in four days seems a bit too extreme, perhaps you'd like to support the team through your prayers and financial contributions. If so, make out your checks to Redeemer, and either put them into the offering basket on a Sunday or mail them to the church office (be sure to designate them to the “North-East Charities Ride.”)