

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

OCTOBER 2003

CONTENTMENT

BY TIM KELLER

How [can] we be content in any circumstance.

Almost everyone believes that spirituality and faith are supposed to bring us ‘peace,’ and indeed that is a major theme of the Bible. Paul famously talks about “*the peace of God which transcends all understanding*” (Phil 4:7) and adds that he has learned how to be content “*whatever the circumstance.*” (4:11) “*I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or want.*” (Phil 4:12)

What’s the principle here? Happiness is not finally a matter of whether our circumstances are positive or negative. Circumstances may be the *occasion* for our peace (or lack of it,) but they are not the ultimate *cause* of it. Peace depends far, far more on the disposition of the heart than on the situations of life.

When Paul says, that ‘*the peace of God will guard your heart*’ the verb literally means that it will “march around the ramparts” of your heart, warding off attacks. In Col 3:15, Paul says ‘*let the peace of Christ rule your hearts.*’ Christ’s peace in the heart exercises a power of its own. It produces peace from within. It works in spite of circumstances.

How then do we cultivate the peace of Christ so that we can be content in any circumstance? There are three strategies that we can find in the third chapter of Paul’s letter to the Colossians.

The first we could call Think Out. “*Since you have been raised with Christ, then set your hearts...*” (3:1) Notice the language of thinking, of logic—“since...then...” Paul is saying that if we want the peace of Christ to rule in our hearts, we have to learn to think.

Why don’t the self-help books and articles start with the big questions? One reason is that the implications of a secular worldview are not very peace-producing. For example, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr—a classic secular 20th century thinker—once wrote: “*There is no reason for attributing to a man a significance different in kind from that which belongs to a baboon or to a grain of sand. The world has produced me and the rattlesnake but I will kill it if I get the chance and the only reason is because it is incongruous to the world I want, the world we are all trying to make according to our own power.*” This sounds incredibly bleak, but he is just thinking out the implications of the view that the world and all its inhabitants are here by sheer accident.

If that is true then first, there
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WEST SIDE MORNING SERVICE START DELAYED

The start of the new West Side morning service originally planned to begin Sunday, November 2nd, has been delayed. Due to renovations taking longer than expected, the Ethical Culture Society will not be able to let us begin using their space until later this year. This new service will take the place of the early service at Hunter on the east side, which will cease to exist. Times and locations are always listed on the front page of www.redeemer.com under the link, “worship services”. An announcement will run here when the new date for the first service is determined.



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is no real reason for saying that human beings are valuable or have any inherent dignity, and second, there is no real right and wrong—only power. There is no obligation to live in any way other than the one that pleases you and that you can get away with. How disturbing! But I know plenty of persons with the same secular world-view who simply refuse to go there. They say, “Well, yes, I agree that the we are all here by accident—but I just know that people are valuable and that injustice is wrong.”

Notice, though, that when you do that you are getting peace of mind by refusing to rigorously think out the implications of your own view. I just want you to notice that Christian peace of mind works in exactly the opposite direction. The Christian learns from the Bible that the world was created by a God who wants our friendship, and even though we’ve turned away from him and made quite a mess of things, he is moving heaven and earth to re-acquire us. At infinite cost to himself, he sent his son to come and redeem us. Nothing will stop him from re-uniting with us.

Paul says if you believe that, think out the implications! Think of how valuable your life is. Think of the inevitable joy you are in for. So for Christians peace comes from thinking out the implications of their basic beliefs about the nature of the world.

Secular people get peace by avoiding the implications of their basic beliefs about the world. If you want the “peace that passes understanding” there can be no intellectual end run. You have to think.

The second strategy we could call Dig Down. “*Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*” (3:5) The term ‘evil desires’ is the Greek word *epithumia*. It is a very hard word to translate. It means an epi-desire, a mega or inordinate desire. Thus the term ‘evil desires’ is somewhat misleading. That term sounds like Paul is talking about ordinary desire for evil things. But actually he is talking about inordinate desires for even good things. So Paul is saying, “*Kill off the over-desires in your heart which are caused by idolatry.*” The first commandment—“*Have no other gods before me*”—we break every day when we put more of our hearts’ functional trust for our significance and security in created things rather than in Jesus. This creates inordinate longings and emotional attachment to these things, even if they are good in themselves.

For instance, it is quite normal to want to be married and to be unhappy if you aren’t. But imagine that you have set your heart so deeply on being married that, as a single, you begin to feel that your

whole life is meaningless and pointless. What is the reason for your profound lack of peace? Is it the circumstance? No, it’s ultimately the disposition of your heart.

The third strategy we could call Look Up. It is not enough to just dig down and find the inordinate desires that are blocking our peace. Something must be put in its place. Paul says: “*set your minds on things above...Your life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*” (3:2-4.) Here we get a rhetorical strategy to use on our own hearts. When you are wracked by epi-anger, fear, and despondency, dig down and discover the inordinate desire. Then look at it and say to it: “You are not my life! You do not define me, make me or break me! *Christ* is my life! You did not die for me, and you cannot redeem me. He did and can and will! So ultimately, I don’t really have to have you.”

When Paul says we must “*Set our minds*” on Christ he certainly is talking about more than just thinking. He means we are to come into Christ’s presence in prayer and rely on the Holy Spirit to make him spiritually real to our hearts. That, ultimately is what cultivates the peace of Christ in the heart. “Come unto me,” says Jesus, “and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matt 11:28-30)

SUNDAY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

On October 5 there will be an insert in the regular Sunday program describing various opportunities to get involved with Redeemer on Sundays. With the inauguration of our West side morning service, our need for help each Sunday will increase dramatically. Please be praying about getting involved and be sure to read your program insert on Sunday, October 5.

REDEEMER REPORT

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HUNTER COLLEGE AUDITORIUM
East 69TH (Between Park & Lexington)
services at 9:30AM • 11:15AM • 6:00PM

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
Corner of West 79TH and Broadway
service at 7:00PM

COUNSELING AT REDEEMER

(Psalm 1:1) Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.

(1:2) But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

One of the most important ways we help our community grow in Christ's grace and knowledge is through the Redeemer Counseling Center. Our counselors are specially trained to apply the power of the Gospel to what are often complex and painful problems. The information below is designed to help the Redeemer community better understand and access the resources of our Counseling Center.

Where is the Redeemer Counseling Center located?

The Center is located at 271 Madison Avenue between 39th & 40th St. on the 8th Floor. The reception hours are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. You can call the Center directly at 212-370-0475, or by calling 212-808-4460, ext 131.

How do I make an appointment?

You must fill out an 'intake form' and mail or fax it to the Counseling Center. The form can be found at Redeemer's web site in the section describing the Counseling Center.

(www.redeemer.com). The form can also be mailed to you. Once the form is returned a counselor appropriate for your needs will be assigned and will contact you for your first appointment.

What if I can't come during normal business hours?

Many of our counselors have office hours in the evenings, and a few see clients on Saturday.

Does the Counseling Center accept insurance?

The Center does not accept insurance. A letter detailing necessary information is provided for you to submit to your insurance company for reimbursement. The reimbursements are dependent upon individual insurance plans.

What other services does the Counseling Center provide?

Aside from individual counseling, there are also support and recovery groups. The RCS provides many tests through its Testing Center. A full description of the six tests currently offered is provided the web site. Two of the more popular tests are:

Career direct Assessment –

Designed to help you work through issues of career change and vocational calling. The assessment takes 2 hours and results in a 34-page report.

Prepare/Enrich Inventories –

Designed for couples who are married, engaged or those who are seriously dating. It takes about 45 minutes to an hour to complete the inventories and follow up sessions are recommended

If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact Judy Cha at judy@redeemer.com, or by calling the Counseling Center directly at the number above.

Apply the power of the Gospel.

FOUNDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY

Redeemer has recently given a "facelift" to its adult educational program. This year, the School of Gospel Foundations (formerly SOCC, School of Christian Community) will be featuring classes that have been designed as part of the Gospel and Life Discipleship Series, Redeemer's multi-faceted discipleship training program, as well as several brand new classes such as *Love in the City* and *The Practice of Prayer*. A Seminar Series featuring Ron Choong from the Academy for Christian Thought on the theme of *Origins* will also be a part of our classes.

One of the central elements God has used to further the growth of community life among his people has always been teaching. Whether it was the teaching of a father to a child, a teacher to a pupil, a prophet to a people, or the Lord to His followers, one of the clearest instruments for community growth and maturation was always the teaching/learning dynamic – the practice of learning in community.

While our hope is to excel in our teaching in our "Foundations" classes, our greater hope is that the School of Gospel Foundations will be a place for the building and growth of true community where we can explore together the implications of the gospel in our lives and in our urban community. For more information, please see our website or email foundations@redeemer.com. Come join us!

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY, BUT DON'T KNOW HOW?

Hope for New York, Redeemer's Mercy Ministry, sends out an email at the end of the month with information about upcoming special events, one-time and group opportunities, new projects and special needs. We promise - only one email a month! To sign up for our monthly email update, please send an email to: monthlyupdate@hfny.org and put "subscribe" in the subject line.



TIS THE SEASON (NO, NOT THAT SEASON)

Investment in Redeemer's vision

As Redeemer begins its 15th year there are countless things for which we are grateful to God. Not the least of which is the faithful way He has provided, through our friends and members, the financial resources that have allowed our ministries and programs to expand. Many of you have given faithfully to the church over the years. But we recognize that there are always new people who attend Redeemer that may not be aware of how we fund the ministry. Some common questions include:

Does Redeemer have an endowment?

No, we rely on the ongoing giving of our supporters. Several years ago money was raised for Church Planting and the establishment of multiple service locations in Manhattan, but the general expenses are funded by the generosity of our members and friends.

How is the budget prepared & finalized?

In August, the Directors of each ministry area submit a budget reflecting their specific goals and objectives for the following year. That budget is reviewed by the Trustees (non-staff positions elected from among the officers) and Elders, and finally by the members. This year the annual meeting at which the 2004 Budget will be discussed will be held on October 26th at Hunter College immediately following the 11:15 Service.

What are some of the ways I can financially contribute to Redeemer's vision?

There are many ways, including writing a check and placing it in the basket each week. Many of our supporters have their banks automatically send us checks on a regular basis from their online banking account. You can also donate appreciated securities,

BY: DAVID BISGROVE

such as stocks and mutual funds, which often times results in tax savings to the donor.

What are some resources to assist me in this process?

On the web site (www.redeemer.com) there are several resources available to help you prayerfully consider your potential financial investment in Redeemer's vision. For example, several of Tim Keller's sermons on Stewardship are available for download. Also, there is a 20 day devotional guide and a Fellowship Group study. There is also a video that was produced last year that is available for viewing on the website that provides additional insight for those interested in our ministry.

If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact David Bisgrove at david@redeemer.com.