

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

MAY 2004

VOLUNTEERING AND UNDERSTANDING GOD'S CALLING

BY CREGAN COOKE

A person who understands their calling, gives whatever God needs.

A few years ago the leaders of the Jr. & Sr. High ministry of Redeemer attended a Youth leader conference at the Young Life camp in Lake Champion. You might wonder why that has much relevance to anyone now, but let me share with you what the main speaker's theme was for that weekend. About 80 youth leaders from churches around the region settled in for the first talk of the weekend and the speaker started things off like this: "How many of you are volunteer youth leaders at your church?" Almost every hand went up. Then he asked: "How many of you feel called to do youth ministry?" About

10 hands went up. He then proceeded: "I want all of you that are volunteering to quit volunteering and find out what God is calling you to do and commit to that. Because a volunteer gives what he or she feels like giving, but a person who understands their calling, gives whatever God needs."

You might think that sounds pretty negative towards volunteering. Volunteering is extremely important and an excellent way to begin serving. It is the lifeblood of Redeemer's ministries. In fact there are hundreds of people volunteering to fill various critical roles for Redeemer every week of the year. But it should

also be recognized that volunteering is a doorway where one can begin to understand what God is calling him or her to do, and not simply a way to feel good about yourself while staying at arm's distance from God's desire for a deeper commitment.

This is where the real challenge lies. In a city where commitment phobia is viewed more as a way of life than a problem, each person is challenged when it comes to putting his or her roots down. We all want to keep "that weekend next month" FREE. In fact many of us keep our calendar completely "booked" so as to never have to deepen our commitment to anything.

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WITH HUMILITY COMES WISDOM

Despite my insecurities, I still felt called to serve

When I first told people that I was becoming a deaconess, several family members, friends and even acquaintances seemed shocked. One person even laughed. You see, I'm one of the last people you'd expect to be promoting "mercy ministries." Very few would describe me as compassionate. And it's that lack of compassion that prompted a

friend to suggest that I serve on the Diaconate. She said that while most of the time we serve where we feel we are gifted, many times we can grow by serving in areas where we are not.

About two-and-a-half years ago, I decided to go through the Diaconate training. From the start, I was intimidated. I saw how naïve I have been to

assume that people in a congregation that seemed so educated and wealthy on the outside couldn't be hurting spiritually, emotionally or even financially. I realized that we would be working with real people with real problems - often involving crises that I wouldn't even begin to know how to tackle. Doubts crept into my mind:

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So what happens is, it becomes very convenient and comfortable to give an hour or two where we can fit it in, while keeping all our options open. What's hard, is to choose an area of service where you feel God wants you and say **whatever it takes** I'm committed to this.

So what are some practical ways to begin deepening one's commitment to a calling?

First, we need to settle on an area that fits well with our gifts and simplify our lives enough to accommodate serving in that capacity.

Second, we need to pray that God would align our hearts with an understanding of the Gospel that makes his will more influential than our own. When we stop to consider the grace and love he has shown us,

it is easy to imagine deepening our commitment to serve him.

When my wife and I were preparing for marriage we met regularly with a Redeemer pastor who instilled a very important concept in our hearts – for your marriage to be successful, it must be about something bigger than yourselves. Although we struggle to live that out consistently, the core of the message is clear: find out what God is calling us to do and make that the priority. When God's calling becomes the priority, then lengthening and deepening the level of commitment becomes easier.

Lastly, we need to put our roots down. New York is a place where everything goes against this simple concept. It's just extremely difficult to do

here. But when you settle in and begin building relationships and stretching yourself in an area where you feel God has led you to, there is a unique joy and fulfillment that comes. Your life and the lives of those you are serving are enriched in a way that only comes through the Gospel's influence on a heart that is willing to follow God's calling.

If each person considering volunteering would take that first step, and those already giving time to a particular project or ministry take the next step to deepen their commitment to what God is calling them to do, we would see a dramatic increase in the influence and the reach of Redeemer's vision to renew the city.

WITH HUMILITY COMES WISDOM

CONT. FROM FRONT PAGE

Do I even know how to solve my own problems? Will I be able to relate to people who are different from me? Am I too young to be a deaconess? Despite my insecurities, I still felt called to serve and see what God had in store. I started my term May 2002, and my worst fears were realized. I didn't have any idea how to help people. I didn't know what the right answers were.

But that's where God has

intervened. I have had to go to Him in prayer because I am so often at a total loss. I've also gained wisdom and encouragement from the team of men and women serving on the Diaconate with me. In the past two years, I've seen that God does provide solutions. He does encourage. He does work in situations that would otherwise seem hopeless. And I've had the privilege to watch it all happen. I don't know if I'd

say I'm more compassionate than I was a year ago. But I have been humbled. In working with clients, I've realized that we are all helpless at times. We've all experienced moments when we find ourselves thrown into a situation beyond our control. But we have a God who loves us, and it is through His grace that we can get through even the most difficult times.

REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller
Rebecca Lock
Fred Liedtke

HUNTER COLLEGE AUDITORIUM
East 69TH (Between Park & Lexington)
services at 10:30AM • 5:45PM

ETHICAL CULTURE
West 64TH and CPW
service at 9:15AM

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

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THE STEWARDSHIP CORNER

BY DAVID BISGROVE

As the warm weather approaches and vacation plans are being finalized, it is a good time to review God's generosity to our community at Redeemer over the last several months. One of the more exciting developments, as many of you know, was the launch of the West Side morning service in December. This completed our plan to establish four worshipping communities around Central Park. We are grateful for the beautiful facilities that accommodate not only the worship service, but also our growing families. Our attendance continues to grow, for which we are deeply grateful. For example, through the first four months our average weekly

attendance has been as follows:

January 3766
February 4156
March 4356
April 5254

(This figure includes the Easter Sunday attendance of 6200)

As you can imagine, this growth presents an ongoing challenge to our staff as we seek to meet the growing demands of our church. We are grateful to those of you who regularly invest in Redeemer's vision. Through the first three months, our giving is approximately \$18,000 below budget (see below)

As you plan your well-deserved vacations, we ask that you remember to pray for Redeemer's ministry throughout the summer. Also, please consider how you might assist us with your resources. We have a budgeted income of \$1,756,763 in the four months from May through August, which is approximately \$100,000 per week.

For more information please visit the Stewardship section of our website (www.redeemer.com).

Thanks again for your ongoing investment in New York City.

January 1 thru March 31 Actual Giving	= \$1,674,638
January 1 thru March 31 Budgeted Giving	= <u>\$1,693,233</u>
Variance	= <u>(\$ 18,594)</u>

DIACONATE OFFICER NOMINATIONS

"HOW CAN I NOMINATE SOMEONE?"

We are receiving nominations for deacon and deaconess for the entire month of May (elder nominations are only received in November.)

If you are a member, you will be receiving a nomination packet at the end of April.

Only members can nominate other members to these offices.

Members may not nominate themselves.

Please prayerfully consider and submit your nominations to Andrea Clark at the church office - by fax (212-808-4465) or mail (the form must be signed.)

Nomination forms can be obtained over the web at www.redeemer.com or by emailing Andrea@redeemer.com.

Questions? Call Andrea at 212-808-4460 ext. 146.

Can a nomination be deferred?

Yes, if you are nominated in May but cannot accept at that time, you may defer your nomination for up to one year.

When is the next Officer Nominee training?

Theological and skills training for the May nominees will be held in the summer and fall, 2004. The nominees will be informed of the dates as soon as they are set.

The deadline is May 31, 2004.



GOSPEL CHRISTIANITY CONFERENCE – THE GOSPEL AND COMMUNITY

The Gospel & Life Discipleship Series is a yearlong intensive discipleship curriculum consisting of three weekend conferences, fellowship group curriculum and Gospel Foundations classes.

Gospel & Community Conference

May 14 to 15, 2004 Friday, 7:00 to 9:00PM and Saturday, 9:00AM to 2:00PM

This conference is the third in our series and focuses on the implication of the gospel for Christian community. Tim Keller and Tuck Bartholomew will lead plenary sessions. Seminar workshops will be led by Fellowship Group Directors. The cost of the conference is \$60. Light refreshments and lunch on Saturday will be provided.

Register online at www.redeemer.com

Who should participate? Anyone in the Redeemer community as well as newcomers and all current leaders should consider being a part of the weekend conferences and then joining a Fellowship Group that is working through the follow-up curriculum.

For questions, contact Kari Jo Cates: karijo@redeemer.com

A THANK YOU FROM HOPE FOR NEW YORK

The board of directors and staff of Hope for New York would like to thank you for the generous response to this year's Easter Sacrificial Offering.

The funds collected will be distributed in June to our affiliates. These affiliates are committed to reaching men, women and children throughout New York City who are suffering from a variety of difficult circumstances. Each affiliate approaches the individual's need from a holistic perspective - reaching mind, body and spirit.

To learn more about the organizations we support, or to review a calendar of volunteer opportunities, please go to www.hfny.org.

Thank you.

Michael O'Neill

Executive Director, Hope For New York

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