

# REDEEMER

R E P O R T

NOVEMBER 2004

## ALL OF LIFE IS REPENTANCE

BY TIM KELLER

Martin Luther opened the Reformation by nailing “The Ninety-Five Theses” to the door of Wittenberg Cathedral. The very first of the theses was: “Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ... willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.” On the surface this looks a little bleak! Luther seems to be saying Christians will never be making much progress. But of course that wasn’t Luther’s point at all. He was saying that repentance is the way we make progress in the Christian life. Indeed, pervasive, all-of-life-repentance is the best sign that we are growing deeply and rapidly into the character of Jesus.

**The transformation of repentance.** It is important to consider how the gospel affects and transforms the act of repentance. In ‘religion’ the purpose of repentance is basically to keep God happy so he will continue to bless you and answer your prayers. This means that ‘religious repentance’ is **a) selfish, b) self-righteous, c) and bitter all the way to the bottom.** But in the gospel the purpose of repentance is to repeatedly tap into the joy of our union with Christ in order to weaken our need to do anything contrary to God’s heart.

‘Religious’ repentance is selfish.

In religion we only are sorry for sin because of its consequences to us. It will bring us punishment — and we want to avoid that. So we repent. But the gospel tells us that sin can’t ultimately bring us into condemnation (Rom 8:1.) Its heinousness is therefore what it does to God—it displeases and dishonors him. Thus in religion, repentance is self-centered; the gospel makes it God-centered. In religion we are mainly sorry for the consequences of sin, but in the gospel we are sorry for the sin itself.

Furthermore, ‘religious’ repentance is self-righteous. Repentance can easily become a form of ‘atoning’ for the sin. Religious repentance often becomes a form of self-flagellation in which we convince God (and ourselves) that we are so truly miserable and regretful that we deserve to be forgiven. In the gospel, however, we know that Jesus suffered and was miserable for our sin. We do not have to make ourselves suffer in order to merit forgiveness. We simply receive the forgiveness earned by Christ.

(1 John 1:8) says that God forgives us because he is ‘just.’ That is a remarkable statement. It would be unjust of God to ever deny us forgiveness, because Jesus earned

our acceptance! In religion we earn our forgiveness with our repentance, but in the gospel we just receive it.

Last, religious repentance is “bitter all the way down.” In religion our only hope is to live a good enough life for God to bless us. Therefore every instance of sin and repentance is traumatic, unnatural, and horribly threatening. Only under great duress does a religious person admit they have sinned—because their only hope is their moral goodness.

But in the gospel the knowledge of our acceptance in Christ makes it easier to admit we are flawed (because we know we won’t be cast off if we confess the true depths of our sinfulness.) Our hope is in Christ’s righteousness, not our own—so it is not so traumatic to admit our weaknesses and lapses. In religion we repent less and less often. But the more accepted and loved in the gospel we feel the more and more often we will be repenting.

And though of course there is always some bitterness in any repentance, in the gospel there is ultimately a sweetness. This creates a radical new dynamic for personal growth. The more you see your own flaws and sins, the more precious,

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### REDEEMER’S OFFICE LOCATION AND ADDRESS HAVE CHANGED

We are now at:

**1359 Broadway (Between W. 36th & 37th Streets) • Fourth Floor • NY, NY 10018-7102**

The phone number will stay the same: 212-808-4460.

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electrifying, and amazing God's grace appears to you. But on the other hand, the more aware you are of God's grace and acceptance in Christ, the more you able you are to drop your denials and self-defenses and admit the true dimensions of your sin. The sin under all other sins is a lack of joy in Christ.

**The disciplines of gospel-repentance.**

If you clearly understand these two different ways to go about repentance, then (and only then!) you can profit greatly from a regular and exacting discipline of self-examination and repentance. I've found that the practices of the 18th century Methodist leaders George Whitefield and John Wesley have been helpful to me here.

In a January 9, 1738, letter to a friend, George Whitefield laid out an order for regular repentance. (He ordinarily did his inventory at night.) He wrote: God give me a deep humility and a burning love, a well-guided zeal and a single eye, and then let men and devils do their worst!" Here is one way to use this order in gospel-grounded repentance.

**Deep humility (vs. pride)**

Have I looked down on anyone? Have I been too stung by criticism? Have I felt snubbed and ignored?

**Repent like this:** Consider the free grace of Jesus until I sense a)

decreasing disdain (since I am a sinner too), b) decreasing pain over criticism (since I should not value human approval over God's love.) In light of his grace I can let go of the need to keep up a good image—it is too great a burden and now unnecessary. Consider free grace until I experience grateful, restful joy.

**Burning love (vs. indifference)**

Have I spoken or thought unkindly of anyone? Am I justifying myself by caricaturing (in my mind) someone else? Have I been impatient and irritable? Have I been self-absorbed and indifferent and inattentive to people?

**Repent like this:** Consider the free grace of Jesus until there is a) no coldness or unkindness (think of the sacrificial love of Christ for you), b) no impatience (think of his patience with you), and c) no indifference. Consider free grace until I show warmth and affection. God was infinitely patient and attentive to me, out of grace.

**Wise courage (vs. anxiety)**

Have I avoided people or tasks that I know I should face? Have I been anxious and worried? Have I failed to be circumspect or have I been rash and impulsive?

**Repent like this:** Consider the free grace of Jesus until there is a) no cowardly avoidance of hard things (since Jesus faced evil for me), b) no anxious or rash behavior (since Jesus' death proves God cares and will watch over me). It takes pride to be anxious — I am not wise enough to know how my life should go. Consider free grace until I experience calm thoughtfulness and strategic boldness.

**Godly motivations (a 'single eye')**

Am I doing what I am doing for God's glory and the good of others or am I being driven by fears, need for approval, love of comfort and ease, need for control, hunger for acclaim and power, or the 'fear of man'? Am I looking at anyone with envy? Am I giving in to any of even the first motions of lust or gluttony? Am I spending my time on urgent things rather than important things because of these inordinate desires?

**Repent like this:** How does Jesus provide for me what I am looking for in these other things? Pray: "O Lord Jesus, make me happy enough in you to avoid sin and wise enough in you to avoid danger, that I may always do what is right in your sight, in your name I pray, Amen."

## NOVEMBER IS OFFICER NOMINATION MONTH

**How Do I Nominate Someone?**

1) You must be a member to nominate another member.

2) Ask the person that you want to nominate for Elder, Deacon or Deaconess if he or she is a member and willing to be considered for the office.

3) Obtain a nomination form from Redeemer's website at [www.redeemer.com](http://www.redeemer.com) (under Diaconate, click on Nomination Form) or pick up a form at any service at the information center.

4) You must FAX the form with the nominee's name(s) and your signature to the church office, attention: Jenny Chang at 212.808.4465.

You may also send it into the office by mail\* or place it in the offering basket during any of the Sundays in November.

5) The deadline for submitting nominations is November 30, 2004.

\*Redeemer's New Office Address: 1359 Broadway, 4th Floor New York, NY 10018

**REDEEMER REPORT**

Kathy Keller

Carl de Prado

Fred Liedtke

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

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[www.redeemer.com](http://www.redeemer.com)

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

# REDEEMER MEALS MINISTRY: A MINISTRY TO ONE ANOTHER

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BY SKOT YABBAGY

Greetings from the new Meals Ministry Coordinator, Skot Yobbagy. I have taken over the meals ministry as of Oct. 1st, from our most excellent and caring coordinator Diane Morgan, who has been a faithful servant for many years. We are proud that she will still remain an active volunteer to be called on as needed. And of course we will always appreciate her hard work and dedication to those who have needed the meals ministry service over the years.

I am a commercial photographer by trade but I love to cook. You might call it a passionate hobby. Years ago I was trying to get more involved in the Redeemer church community and specifically with programs reaching out to those in need. I was a bit confused as to how to offer myself at the time.

Determined to serve, I was introduced to a list of activities with HFNY. Finding a few that dealt

with food, something I knew about, I got involved and started to utilize my cooking abilities. This eventually led me to expand my service and brought me into the Redeemer Meals Ministry. Finally I realized that serving others doesn't have to be some kind of elaborate or complicated task. For me, what better way to serve than by sharing my cooking abilities with someone in need.

The Meals Ministry provides prepared meals for Redeemer members and regular attendees who are post operative patients, accident victims, experiencing debilitating illnesses, new mothers, having problem pregnancies and experiencing bereavement. You can support this ministry by calling the Meals Ministry Coordinator to have your name added to the list of people willing to be called should someone need meals in your geographic area.

Most volunteers are called to deliver a meal no more than five or six times a year. Volunteers can either prepare or purchase a prepared meal and can choose how far and the areas to which they are willing to travel. They will be provided with information on the number of people to be served, any special dietary needs or other instructions and the recipient's address and phone number for arrangement of delivery.

Since we never really know when or where or how many requests we are going to receive for these kinds of needs it is wonderful to have as many volunteers as possible ready to provide and be of service when even the simple task of preparing a meal can be a major challenge. Please contact Skot Yobbagy at 212-330-7026 to join this very special, community-building ministry.

## A CHANGED HEART, A CHANGED LIFE

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BY YVETTE KNIGHT

Two years ago when I joined the Diaconate, I was looking forward to working with the other deacons and having a positive impact on the church community. I was very excited about the thought of being a positive change agent for those I supported. I gave little thought to the impact this experience would have on my own life.

The Lord had another plan. What has happened is that serving on the Diaconate has not only changed the course of my life, it has also changed the condition of my heart.

My life change began when I was recently laid off and I became unemployed. Months before this happened, I had been praying about a career change. I took a look at my skills, my talents and at the things that gave me some passion. I had to look no further than my work on the Diaconate. I loved

supporting my clients. The work was a perfect fit for the skills I had been given.

To make a long story short, I am now studying to be a psychotherapist. I thank God for using this work to give me a new career path, a path that I hope will bring honor and glory to Him.

My heart change began as a result of you, the Redeemer congregation. I am truly amazed at your generosity to support this work. Your giving has made me realize that as a Christian community, we can really take care of each other in very practical and tangible ways. I want to assure you that we make every effort to be good stewards of what you give to us.

In my former corporate life, success was mostly dependent on my skills, my effort and my intelligence. My corporate clients looked to me for answers to complex

communication problems and issues. In my work as a Deaconess, there are times when my intelligence fails and I must depend on the Lord for His guidance and for His wisdom. Also, results are not time bound by the fiscal or the calendar year, and I must be patient as He works out His purpose in our lives. Success is now dependent on where and on how the Lord leads.

Finally, my biggest lesson comes from my clients. I have watched you manage through very difficult situations. You have taught me what it means to persevere. I consider it a privilege to be a part of your lives and I strive to continue to earn your trust.

So there you have it. That is my story. If you join the Diaconate, I am not sure what story the Lord will write for you. But I am very grateful for a changed life and more importantly for a changed heart.

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## ADVERTISING AND MARKETING GROUP: KICKOFF LUNCHEON

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**Sunday, November 7th, 12:15PM to 2:15PM**

Lunch will be provided.

All areas of marketing welcome: Advertising, Brand Management, Product Management, etc.

**To volunteer to help and/or rsvp, please contact Sheeba Philip at [marketing@redeemer.com](mailto:marketing@redeemer.com)**

## "DISCOVER YOUR STRENGTHS" SEMINAR

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Discover your strengths using the DiSC behavior style assessment. Build a framework for understanding behavior in a Biblical context. Facilitated by Donna Bessai and sponsored by Redeemer's Center for Faith and Work

**Part 1: Understanding Yourself – Saturday, November 6th, 9:00AM to 12:00PM**

**Part 2: Understanding Others – Saturday, November 20th, 9:00AM to 12:00PM**

Location: Redeemer Conference Room, 1359 Broadway @ West 36th Street, Fourth Floor  
Continental Breakfast will be served at 8:30AM

**Register Online (\$35) at [www.faithandwork.org](http://www.faithandwork.org)**

The \$35 fee includes your personal assessment report, which needs to be taken online in advance of the seminar. Limited space available.

## EDUCATION FORUM 2004

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Hosted by the Educator's Fellowship Group and sponsored by Redeemer's Center for Faith and Work

**"The Gospel Changes Everything... even Education!" Lecture and Q&A with Dr. Tim Keller**

Friday, November 5th, 6:00PM to 9:30PM  
American Bible Society, 1865 Broadway @ 61st Street

**Register Online (\$10) at [www.faithandwork.org](http://www.faithandwork.org)**

Hors d'oeuvres and beverages provided.