

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

AUGUST 2005

LOOKING FOR AN OUT OF THE ORDINARY EXPERIENCE WITH GOD?

By David Cook, Redeemer Fellowship Group Coordinator

Remember Moses and the burning bush? Have you ever wondered what it would be like to encounter God in such an immediate and personal way? For Moses it came after 40 years of herding sheep in the Sinai. Certainly he had seen bushes burning. This one just didn't burn up – and that piqued his interest. God used Moses' curiosity to change the direction of his life. Moses wasn't always that convinced it was a change for the better. On bad days he must have keenly felt the irony in being conscripted to yet another 40 years of herding an even more cantankerous flock through an even more hostile terrain. But on good days Moses must have realized something special was going on. Moses' epitaph—after 40 years of responding to the daily grind—was “Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face.” And like it or not, that's the deal. If you want to know God face to face, to hear his voice so you can respond to his call, you need to engage with God's difficult flock through rough terrain.

Not that this is a new idea at Redeemer. We've all heard to be part of Redeemer you need to

be in a Fellowship Group; that God uses our community to change us and enable us to change New York City. But less than half of us are in groups. As part of Redeemer's Vision Campaign this fall we hope to change this. For the almost 3,000 Sunday Service attendees who are not in a Fellowship Group, Redeemer will launch 100 special Vision Groups that will run for just seven weeks. Be curious about these Vision Groups; walk over to this burning bush.

If you think attending a special Vision Group for seven weeks is a *try-before-you-buy* scheme for Fellowship Groups, you're right. You don't have to buy into Redeemer's vision for the city. Come for whatever reason. Just be curious. See if God uses community to meet you; but let me warn you to expect the unexpected. Even now, after many years in Fellowship Groups, I tend to look for the dramatic and exciting, but end up running into the limitations of myself and others. God, on the other hand, is working on character, changing hearts and opening eyes.

Working out what God is doing isn't easy, so if you're thinking of taking our seven week challenge, let me give you a heads up on how you can expect God to change you, and how to discover God's plan for you in community. God knows what you need.

I joined a fellowship group to meet new people when I first arrived in New York. In fact I was a little worried that a Fellowship Group would be too happy-clappy for my liking, so I also enrolled in a photography class to hedge my bets. My group was welcoming, and there seemed to be plenty of smart intellectual people with whom I figured I could be friends. But it didn't come together as I wanted it to. It wasn't that it was bad; it was just that it wasn't perfect either. While I was lamenting the fact that Christians of my age were all saccharine sweet, or didn't have a sense of humor that I could connect with, or were too conservative, the group leader started reaching out to me, calling me occasionally, inviting me round to dinner, meeting me for breakfast. I was pretty raw; he was very gracious.

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WHY CAN'T GOD FIX MY CIRCUMSTANCES??

By Andrea U. Mungo, *Diaconate Director*

I admit that I often succumb to focusing too much on God fixing my circumstances and the areas of weakness in myself rather than on meeting God and resting in His arms of grace in the midst of my trials and struggles. This comes up repeatedly in my work and ministry on the Diaconate. I find my-self hoping that our deacons/esses and those under their care would find the right solution to their problems and everyone would be happy. Ultimately, Jesus will make those who have placed their faith in Him whole and beautiful. But until then, what is God up to and how are we to live in the midst of a less than perfect world?

One way is through service to and love for one another. The Diaconate is a deed and word ministry. Our deeds (offering financial assistance or other tangible care and assistance) and our words have four purposes:

1. To point our clients to the Trinitarian God in the hopes of reconciliation to Him for salvation and sanctification (progressive healing and holiness);
2. To point our clients to the ultimate healing and wholeness that will come with the fullness of Christ's return and;
3. To alleviate/meet temporary needs brought on by brokenness in our clients and in others who have affected them.
4. To be a loving and truth-telling expression of community

to those we serve.

I've been reading a book titled *Yearning: Living Between How It Is and How It Ought To Be* by M. Craig Barnes. A section of it gave me more clarity on how we are to stand with one another as we face our brokenness.

"I believe Scripture teaches death is not what God had in mind for his beloved creation. Nevertheless, the pristine garden of life is not gone. On this side of its gates, it seems God seldom prevents things from dying. From time to time we all hear encouraging stories of prayer "working" to alter death's course, but frankly, I usually can't see it. We faithfully pray for God to change the way it is in our suffering world, but everyday thousands of malnourished children keep dying. And as if our own injustices weren't bad enough, natural disasters—"acts of God"—continue to haunt us. Closer to home, we pray for healing in our own lives and in the lives of the people we love. In spite of those prayers, things just keep slipping away. We are constantly letting go of something, someone, or some cherished dream.

Actually, there is very little in Scripture to support the dream that God will fix life for us. There are some magnificent stories of healing and feeding. Still, as far as I know, everyone who was healed once became sick again and eventually died.

Everyone who was fed was certainly hungry the next morning. Those great miracles were never meant to make broken people whole. The healing miracles were offered as part of Jesus' ministry of reconciliation to draw the broken to God. What God wants, more than anything, is to love us. But that doesn't satisfy us. We would prefer that he fix us.

Pain and heartache define an individual's life as much as joy. If someone lost his or her painful memories and experiences, he or she would cease to be the same person. No one is helped by ignoring or spiritualizing away the heartaches of the past (or present – my addition). The path of spirituality is found in accepting and even loving that which is broken and scarred, rather than in searching for a new wholeness. We will always be a people in need. That is how we know we are creatures and not gods. That is also how most of us find our way to living with God. The only prayer I know that always 'works' is the one that asks God to hold our broken lives in the arms of his grace. Most of the time, that has to be enough." Pages 79,80

I just started reading the Gospel of Luke again. In chapter 1, Mary's song and Zechariah's song both foretell of the future plans of a Redeemer, who will forgive, have mercy upon and sanctify His people. What a grand hope to look

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REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller
Carl de Prado
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ETHICAL CULTURE
West 64TH and CPW
service at 9:15AM

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

I would project my values, my politics, my criticisms on the church; he opened up his life, shared his struggles, and made himself vulnerable to me. God knew I needed the community of others to exemplify the gospel in a far more powerful way than simply hearing a weekly sermon. For seven weeks this fall bring whatever expectations you have, God will give you what you need.

How will God change you through community? The short answer is he will use the caustic to kill the Gnostic. What do I mean? When we think we understand Tim's sermons but are not practicing it in routine Christian community, our faith lives in an ivory tower. It's not a new idea to believe that we can connect to God with, the wisdom of the age (even real wisdom founded on absolute truth). Getting along with God is not easy. I know I mostly try to avoid him. My prayer life and scripture reading often degenerate into a type of rote disengagement characterized by emotional and spiritual laziness. My mind still thinks the thoughts, but my heart is not walking the walk. The good news is when I begin to fall into regular sin patterns, my community holds me accountable. I feel anxious and overwhelmed and

people notice. It's in my community that I catch myself being irritated, or am held accountable for beating up on myself or someone else. And it's good news because these "I want to avoid conflict at all costs but something is going horribly wrong" moments, are God personally talking to me, reminding me of his love, telling me I'm losing touch with him. For seven weeks this fall come and experience what it means that God is faithful even if we are not.

Community is God's plan for us – without it we will not mature. If we approach trials simply as issues of character and devotion, we get stuck in spiritual holding patterns. We struggle to be obedient, but are unable to do anything more than try harder and attempt to manage our behavior. I know I've done this: curve balls come my way and I strike out. I find myself unable to spiritually self-correct. God forces me to acknowledge my own weakness. And I'm humbled to admit that the resources he provides are only through my community. For seven weeks, come and discover the strength there is in weakness.

When we mistake the Christian life for a precarious balancing act, we are constantly stressed about falling. It is the

ordinariness of community that God uses to push us off this self-created high wire act. And it is the beauty of community that God uses to let us see his place of safety. Community is liberating. It makes us realize that there is no where left to fall. God isn't predictable but he welcomes our real life struggles. He will keep redirecting our agendas, and he will use community to do it.

Come and experience this for yourself. For seven weeks this fall, let God use the unique dynamics of a community, to provide you with a face to face encounter with him.

Both the Vision Groups and the regular Fellowship Groups will follow a special sermon-based curriculum for a period of time in the fall. Become a functional part of the church community as we work through the implication of Redeemer's Vision. Be curious. Be willing to be surprised by both the ordinariness and the transforming nature of the experience. Struggle with us as we work out what it means to participate in the daily grind of God's redemptive plan.

You will see and hear more about how to get into a Vision Group before the end of the summer.

FIX MY CIRCUMSTANCES??

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forward to! But until then, our only hope is abiding in Jesus and being a community of grace and truth to one another. Jesus is intimately familiar with our struggle as he endured on the cross the pain and death that sin produces. The good news of the Gospel is that we will not have

to experience the finality of eternal death AND while we are still on this earth, His presence, power and love abides with us in our brokenness and neediness until we are fully free.

John 15:4-5 "4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless

it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.

⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

SUNDAY SERVICE MINISTRIES NEWS:

1ST ANNUAL SPRING PICNIC COMMENCES IN CENTRAL PARK!

By Phoebe Kneck

On a glorious June afternoon following Redeemer's morning services, Volunteers flocked to Central Park's Sheep Meadow for Sunday Service Ministries 1st Annual Spring Picnic. Volunteers brought their lunches to feast and fellowship in the shade across a span of red and white checkered picnic blankets—each speckled with games, kites, Frisbees, and an assortment of tasty treats. While an unnamed songstress provided ambiance with her guitar, the SSM's first Spring Picnic proved to be an East-meets-West soiree.

"The picnic is a great place to connect. As soon as I got there I connected with another Usher Captain, Rob Koh, from a different service."

- Usher Captain Linda Guido

"I had a blast sharing times with some of the unsung heroes of our ministry while taking in the beautiful weather and music."

- Usher Captain Rob Koh

Patricia Pantoja of the Welcome Center, made some interesting discoveries:

"I finally got to catch up with friends that I had been out of touch with. I didn't even know they were Volunteers!"

Until we picnic together again in Spring 2006, Volunteers stay tuned for the anticipated Fall BBQ this September!

Phoebe Kneck
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DIACONATE NOMINATIONS UPDATE

Redeemer members have the important responsibility of nominating and electing individuals to serve our congregation as deacons, deaconesses and elders. This past May, the Diaconate accepted nominations for the offices of deacon/ess (the Session only takes nominations for elders in November). The following individuals have been nominated and have begun the process of evaluation.

Deacon Nominees:

Jaymin Berg
Michael Corey

Deaconess Nominees:

Cate Capozzi
Barbara Holton
Joy Hsueh
Esther Huh
Stacey Huiskes
Amelia Lay
Amy Newman

Please pray for these nominees as they go through training in theology and ministry skills and prepare for their interviews and examination in October. They will be evaluated on their character, Christian life and experience, theological understanding, giftedness and readiness to serve the church as an officer. The current elders will then determine which individuals will be presented for election at the October congregational meeting. If you have questions about the nominating, training and evaluation process, please contact Andrea Mungo at 212-808-4460 ext 146 or andrea@redeemer.com.

WHAT IS DISC ALL ABOUT?

By Donna Bessai

How often do you wonder why people act the way they do or become frustrated by certain people's behavior? People conflicts remain number one on the list of problems we face in the work place, as well as in our churches.

Last November, I facilitated the first DiSC seminar to a group of Redeemerites seeking to discover their strengths through the DiSC model of understanding human behavior. The seminar was the first of now an on-going offering sponsored by Redeemer's Center for Faith & Work to help people in our congregation gain insight into their God-given design and develop strategies on to relate more effectively with one another.

"I think the DiSC seminar is very helpful because it gives valuable insight into how we differ from each other in terms of communication style and work habits, and why understanding these differences matter," claimed participant, Alec Dana.

During the "Discovering Your Strengths" seminar, the group took an in-depth look at the four primary behavior styles, including their own, that they had discovered from the DiSC assessment taken beforehand. The style categorizations of this tool are captured in the name: D for "dominance," I for "Interactive," C for "Controlled," and S for "Steady."

Some people are startled at what they learn, while others encouraged with the verification of their suspicions.

"As soon as I discovered which group I was in, I was furious," said Mark Horton, who attended a Redeemer Staff seminar in February 2005. "However, as Donna continued to teach us about the different behavioral types, I became intrigued. I

began seeing how some of my strengths, if misused, were capable of causing a lot of pain for other people; and how some characteristics that I considered weaknesses were not weaknesses at all."

Chris Miles expressed that delving into the motivational drives of each behavioral style in community was especially beneficial for personal and corporate growth.

People are complex and we sometimes behave in perplexing ways. Not understanding our own temperament and that of those around us can lead to misunderstanding and conflicts in the work place and at home. In my work with Living by Design, I help people to value each other's different gifts and styles, as each one contributes immensely to the body of Christ.

As 1 Peter 4:10-11 points out, "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised."

Laura Fels said, "it's not about me expecting people to relate to my profile; instead, it's about figuring out how my profile can best relate to others. And it has become such a useful tool, both in my personal life and in ministry!"

"I deal with people everyday," added Phoebe Kmeck, "—it's my job! As a servant leader, knowing how to best work with all of God's unique sons and daughters is essential in order for me to know how I can also best serve them. To lead is to serve, and the DiSC model has truly

helped me grow as a leader."

Through the help of the Holy Spirit's transforming power and our willingness to change and adapt to each other's behavior styles, we can do great works for the kingdom and enjoy the process at the same time.

We will be offering both the basic seminar and several follow-on sessions this coming fall. Please register online at www.faithandwork.org.

Saturday, September 24, 2005
9:00 am - 12:00 pm
**"DiSCovering Your Strengths"
Basic Seminar**
Fee: \$40

The following sessions require past completion of "DiSCovering Your Strengths" Basic Seminar:

Wednesday, October 5, 2005
6:30 pm - 9:00 pm
**Learn About Your Behavior
When You Are in Conflict
With Others**
Fee: \$15

Wednesday, October 19, 2005
6:30 pm - 9:00 pm
**Learn How to Recognize the
Styles of Other People**
Fee: \$15

Wednesday, November 2, 2005
6:30 pm - 9:00 pm
**Learn How to Adapt Your
Communication Styles**
Fee: \$15

Wednesday, November 16, 2005
6:30 pm - 9:00 pm
**Learn to Adapt Your
Management Approach Based
on Willingness and Ability**
Fee: \$15

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PROFESSIONAL GROUP EVENTS

Redeemer Inter-Arts Fellowship

Friday, September 9, 2005, 6:45PM - 9:00PM

Redeemer offices, 1359 Broadway at 36th Street, 4th Floor

Join Redeemer's monthly gathering of fine and performing artists, designers, and those working in the media and entertainment. Get to know others in our community, look more deeply into how our faith impacts our work, share your work, and encourage each other in our faith.

Marketing and Advertising Group Fall Kick-Off

Sunday, Sept 11, 2005, 12:00PM - 1:30PM

Hunter East, Room C002

Come meet others in the marketing, advertising, sales, PR, and design professions and kick off a new year of friendship, thought-provoking programs, and consulting projects for HFNY. Volunteer to help at cfw@redeemer.com.

Educators Group Fall Kick-Off

Sunday, Sept 11, 2005, 12:00PM - 2:00PM

Hunter West, Room 507

All educators are invited to kick-off this year with the theme: Mission-Driven School Year. Meet educator's pre-K to college as we challenge and inspire each other to see ourselves as part of God's renewal of the city. Become involved in a vital, exciting ministry.

For these and other CFW events and information, please check out our website at www.faithandwork.org or leave a voicemail at 21.