

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

FEBRUARY 2008

HELPLESSLY RELATIONAL

BY SCOTT SAULS

The movie *Jerry Maguire* includes perhaps one of the sappiest scenes in the history of film. Jerry, separated from his wife, suddenly comes to his senses—his life is not complete without his wife in it. So, he barges into his wife's sister's house (where his wife is staying at the time), and in the middle of a room filled with women who see men as "the enemy," says to her, "You complete me." He continues on with a long soliloquy about how he loves and needs her.

"Shut up. Shut up," she responds, "You had me at hello. You had me at hello."

OK...either you see this as one of the most moving scenes ever, or...it makes you want to gag. Either way, it accentuates the reality that human beings are helplessly relational. The image of the Lone Ranger or the Marlboro Man who are symbols of strength and independence—people who need no one else but themselves—is bogus. John Donne spoke truthfully when he coined the phrase, "No man is an island." We *are* helplessly relational. We

need connection or we will die.

Why is this so? It is because we are created in the image of God—and God is Himself intensely relational. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit co-exist as a perfect, mutually loving, mutually supportive, in-covenant *community*. What this means is that we, who are created in God's image, cannot help but need relationship—without it our lives become distorted. This is why so many people, living in a culture where over 50% of marriages end in divorce, still ache for a "significant other." This is why so many of us are still willing to take the risks involved with loving, even though it exposes us to the potential agony of rejection and betrayal.

Friendship means self-disclosure

Sartre once said that hell is to be looked at. Our fear of being known flows out of a fear of exposure, because exposure opens us up to potential rejection. Out of self-protection we therefore keep others at a distance. The intimacy we long for is also the intimacy we fear. We are reluctant to go deep.

But biblical friendship goes deep. It takes the risk because the unshakable favor and loyalty of Jesus provides us with a safety net. The Gospel gives us the emotional wealth for *self-disclosure*—a form of transparency that gives two people (or, even more ideal, a community of people) consistent access to each other's dreams, fears, loves, hatreds, struggles and sins.

The difficulty with self-disclosure, however, is that we are all afraid on a deep level of being looked at, of being truly known. We want it more than anything and we also fear it more than anything. What if he rejects me? What if she uses my struggles against me? Self-disclosure is indeed risky...yet any friendship or (especially) any marriage that doesn't take the risk is a costly counterfeit to the real thing. As C.S. Lewis once said, "Love anything and your heart will be...broken..." If you want to protect yourself from the risks of love, "you must give (your heart) to no one...the only place outside Heaven where you can be

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Tim Keller's book, *The Reason for God*, will be officially released February 14. It can be pre-ordered at barnesandnoble.com or Amazon.com. Some copies are available at the Redeemer book table, but due to demand they are often sold out. The book will be used as part of the March 2 Open Forum (see articles inside), so we are suggesting that each person planning to attend give a book to a skeptical friend when inviting him or her to come. We're hoping that all those who plan to attend will bring a friend who has questions.



SKEPTICISM AND THE GOSPEL

The message of the gospel, the good news of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and reign, is often met with deep skepticism. This is understandable, given the tendency of the human heart to seek its identity in anything other than God, and our resistance to the idea that we need 'saving.' Of course everyone, those who are Christians and those who are still wrestling with the claims of the gospel, live on a continuum of skepticism and need to 're-evangelize' their hearts constantly with the good news of the gospel.

Beginning March 2nd, in con-

junction with Tim Keller's new book written for skeptics, *The Reason for God*, Redeemer will launch a two month season in which we will provide additional opportunities for those who have yet to fully embrace the claims of Christianity. Some of the events include:

- Two "Open Forum" events at Hunter College, the first of which will be at 6:00PM on March 2nd. This event is designed for those who are seeking more information about the claims of Christianity.
- Tim Keller will preach every

Sunday at the 6:00PM service during the period of March through May, and several times during these two months he will stay and answer questions after the service.

- Additional classes designed specifically for skeptics will be available after other Sunday Services.
- Other events are being planned and will be announced as they are scheduled. We hope that everyone in the Redeemer community will take advantage of these events to engage with those who are still skeptical about the claims of Jesus.

HELPLESSLY RELATIONAL

(CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

perfectly safe from all the dangers of love is Hell."

Friendship means enduring loyalty

Rather than being deeply committed "til death parts us," most of us are "committed" to people only to the degree and duration that they are *useful to us*. As long as they are meeting our needs at a cost that is suitable to us—as long as we are getting *from* the relationship at least as much as we are investing into it—we will stay with the relationship. But when a relationship becomes costly to us, we withdraw. We get a new friend, a new roommate, a new job, a new church, or even a new spouse, when the cost/benefit ratio is no longer in our favor. Rather than sticking with each other "until death do us part," we stick together "as long as our love shall last" or "as long as I'm getting something from this relationship—as long as my needs are met at an acceptable cost to me."

This sounds like a cold assessment, but it is true for many of us if we take a deeper look at our motivations for many of our relationships. Yet the Bible calls for relational commitments that endure...flowing from the Gospel, from Jesus' eagerness to "stick with us" even though having us as his friends cost Him everything.

Friendship means a vision for each other's glory

Whereas "modern" friendship asks, "What can this person do to make my life better?" a Gospel-centered friendship asks, "What can I do to make this person's life better? What can I do to 'enhance her glory,' to help her be and become all she can be, as the person God created her to be and to become?" When the Christian Gospel gets into our hearts, it changes our entire paradigm for our acquaintances, our friendships, and our marriages. When

we understand that all of our deepest and truest needs have been met by Jesus, our hearts are freed to love—and to devote |ourselves to the good of the other people in our lives. Modern people treat friendship as a *negotiation* (I'll take care of you if you take care of me, I'll serve you to the degree that you serve me), whereas Christians treat it as a *covenant* (I will stick with you even if you become costly and high-maintenance to me). Modern friendship is devoted to receiving from the other person. In a covenant, Gospel-oriented friendship, the good of the other person and the relationship take priority over our own needs and wants. And this kind of "one-anothering" becomes possible only to the degree that Jesus, who "one-anothered" us by giving himself to us all the way to death, becomes our deepest and most significant other.

REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller
Heather Klein

HUNTER COLLEGE AUDITORIUM
East 69TH (Between Park & Lexington)
services at 10:30AM • 6:00PM

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

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
Corner of West 79TH and Broadway
service at 5:00PM & 7:15PM

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OFFICE • 1359 BROADWAY (BETWEEN W. 36/37TH STREETS) • FOURTH FLOOR • NY, NY 10018-7102
(212) 808-4460 (PHONE) (212) 808-4465 (FAX) www.redeemer.com

SUPPORT GROUPS?

It is inevitable in life that we will encounter suffering. Living in a broken world with broken people, we cannot avoid or prevent the unexpected and at times, the devastating experiences. Furthermore, since we are broken ourselves, we cannot consistently respond appropriately or remain unaffected by our experiences. Some crumble us. Some entangle us. Some threaten our safety. Is there hope?

There is hope not only for survival, but also for restoration and growth. Jesus says, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." Therefore, He does not abandon us in our experiences. His provision is the community of believers. He uses broken people to extend healing to broken people.

Transformation toward health and growth takes engagement in a community. Growth and healing do not occur in isolation. It is this community that gives us an experience of grace, reminds us of biblical truth and supports us when we are at our weakest. In the grip of a particular struggle, it

is absolutely imperative to have a safe community, which understands our struggles, offers hope, and comes along side us to support us in our process of growth without condemnation.

In an effort to create such a community, the Redeemer Support Group Network was created. In our groups we strive for a safe and compassionate environment to which we can invite those who are struggling with various issues, including addictions of all forms. The groups offer practical help by applying the gospel to the particular struggle.

Redeemer Support Groups are a place to not only to receive support from others who are going through a similar recovery process, but also a place where you can provide support and give hope and encouragement.

Current Support Groups:

- **Boundaries** for those who struggle with patterns of unhealthy relationships.
- **Chemical Dependency** for those struggling with substance or alcohol addictions.

- **Financial Recovery** for those struggling with unhealthy patterns of financial management.
- **Divorce Recovery** for those struggling after a broken marriage or in process of separation toward divorce.
- **12 Step Groups** (2 groups divided by gender) for anyone struggling with various forms of hurts, hang-ups, or habits.

New Groups in 2008:

- **Healing from Abuse** for women healing from the experience of childhood sexual abuse
- **Stepping Stones to Life After Loss** for those who have recently lost a loved one
- **Lifework Support** for those struggling with career direction
- **Family Support for Substance Abusers** offers hope and help to families of substance abusers.

For more information, contact Anna@redeemer.com

STEWARDSHIP CORNER

In Psalm 65 David wrote the following concerning God's generosity, "*You crown the year with your bounty, and your carts overflow with abundance.*" As I reflected on this Psalm in light of Redeemer's year-end giving I was reminded again of God's love and provision for his people.

As most of you know, Redeemer needed to receive over \$2.4M in December to meet its operating budget requirements. Thanks to the financial generosity of our congregation and friends, total 2007 giving surpassed our goal of \$9.7M. \$10.1M was given, which marks the first time that

Redeemer has received more than ten million dollars in operating giving. This allows us to begin the 2008 ministry year on firm financial footing to accomplish the broader goals of our church. Our operating giving goal for 2008 stands at \$10.8M.

In addition, we received \$14.3M in cumulative giving towards the Vision Campaign, which represents 74.5% of the total pledged of \$19.2M, and was also above our year-end goal—which was 66% pledge completion. This will help Redeemer tremendously towards closing in spring on the purchase our first

BY DAVID BISGROVE
worship and community center on the Upper West Side. We are now in the third and final year of our 2006-2008 vision campaign giving. December 31, 2008 marks the end of the three-year pledge commitment to the vision campaign that our congregation began in Fall 2005.

It is part of God's grace that he allows us to participate in his generosity through the giving of our time and money. Thank you again for your gifts, and let us all celebrate how God has 'crowned the year' with his bounty.



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OPEN FORUM

Redeemer will hold an Open Forum at the Hunter College Auditorium (69th/Park) on Sunday, March 2 at 6:00 p.m. This will be in place of that day's East Side evening worship service. Open Forums are opportunities to explore topics of wide interest through art, lecture, and community discussion.

The evening will begin with a 45-minute concert of pop and R&B songs that address the search for spiritual meaning. The concert will feature many of Redeemer's soloists along with the evening service band. Following the concert, Tim Keller will give a lecture addressing the themes in his new book, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*. After the lecture, Tim will conduct a question-and-answer session with the audience.

We encourage you to bring a friend who might be interested in exploring the claims of Christianity. Remember that Open Forums tend to fill up quickly, so please arrive early (and with a friend!)

OFFICER NOMINATION UPDATE

Redeemer members have the important responsibility of nominating and electing other members to serve our congregation as elders, deacons and deaconesses. This past November 2007 the Diaconate and Session accepted nominations for the offices of elder, deacon and deaconess. The following individuals have been nominated and have begun the process of evaluation and training.

Elder Nominees:

Alex Chou
Andrew Chen
Larry Christensen

Deacon Nominees:

Greg Nance
Bill Paparis

Deaconess Nominees:

Rose Marie Armstrong	Julie Lew	Priscilla Osewalt
Kathleen Boatman	Anita Mani	Emily Rauscher
Deb Christensen	Melissa Newman	Michelle Turner
Carolyn Jacobs	Inga Norton	

Please pray for these nominees as they go through training in theology and ministry skills and prepare for their interviews. They will be evaluated on their character, Christian life and experience, theological understanding, and 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 May 4th congregational meeting. If you have questions about the nominating, evaluation and training process, please contact Jenny Chang at (212) 808-4460 xx187 or jenny@redeemer.com or Helen Chen-Baez at x135 or helen@redeemer.com.