

# REDEEMER

R E P O R T

SEPTEMBER 2008

## YES, I WROTE (ANOTHER) BOOK

BY TIM KELLER

Just last fall I wrote an article in the newsletter telling you that “Yes, I wrote a book,” *The Reason for God*, which came out in February 2008. It has been bought and distributed much more widely than I had ever imagined it would be. This is to tell you that I’ve got another volume coming out this fall. (I’m not as prolific as that might seem; both manuscripts were finished at the same time, after years of work!)

The new book is entitled *The Prodigal God* and it should be out October 30. It is an expansion of my sermon on the Prodigal Son parable in Luke 15. Kathy and I have long felt that this was the clearest and best single exposition of the gospel I’ve been able to do over the years. My interpretation of the parable was originally

based on a sermon called “Sharing the Father’s Welcome” that I heard preached by Dr. Edmund P. Clowney over 35 years ago. That sermon had a profound impact on how I preached for the rest of my ministry. In some ways the teaching of this sermon is at the very foundation of Redeemer’s ministry. I have preached on the text three times at Redeemer over the years. The initial time was in the first several weeks of our church’s life in 1989. The second was about ten years later, and the last time was to start off the 2005 Vision Campaign. Each time I felt God helping me get deeper into the meaning of the story. After the 2005 sermon, I began to turn it into a short book.

What’s the book about? It’s about being ‘prodigal.’ The word

‘prodigal’ is an English word that means recklessly extravagant, spending to the point of poverty. The dictionaries tell us that the word can be understood in a more negative or a more positive sense. The more positive meaning is to be lavishly and sacrificially abundant in giving. The more negative sense is to be wasteful and irresponsible in one’s spending. (Some people think prodigal means ‘wayward,’ but there is no dictionary that indicates that the word means ‘immoral.’) The negative sense obviously applies to the actions of the younger brother in the Luke 15 parable. But is there any sense in which God can be called ‘prodigal’? I think so.

First, the elder brother is offended by the father’s extravagant

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## KOINONIA: EXPERIENCE IT THIS FALL

BY MATTHEW PAUL BUCHERI

**K**oinonia (pronounced: coin-no-knee-ah) is an ancient Greek word with deep, rich meaning—a word that the New Testament writers knew well; and a word you can begin to experience this fall in as little as seven weeks. So, what do we need to

know about *koinonia* in order to experience it properly?

**Koinonia = Fellowship**

The word “fellowship” is somewhat of an archaic word in the English language today. It is used in twelve-step programs to express the time spent after an

official meeting; and it is also used within the Christian church to speak about time spent among Christians outside of a church service. (Often with food involved!) But when was the last time you said to a friend from

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# WAVES OF MERCY

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Although I've been serving on the Diaconate for some time, it's not until recently that I've understood the full magnitude of the Diaconate's mercy-centric ministry. The bulk of the Diaconate's work is to serve our congregants who are experiencing hardships by providing practical help. Deaconesses and deacons ("deacs") involved in client work typically do not have access to information about cases other than their own. This is in adherence to the Diaconate's policy of strict client confidentiality.

The preeminence of client confidentiality policy creates silos in which information is available

only to the Diaconate staff members and partnering deacs on their respective cases. Though one of the functions of the Diaconate's Operations Team (Ops team) is to review and approve financial requests, only client situations, not their identities, are made known to the Ops team.

In my new capacity as a member of the Ops team, I am beginning to realize the sheer scale of the Diaconate's work in the lives of our church community. What I have observed through the simultaneous efforts of numerous deac teams are powerful collective waves of God's redemptive love that are being

BY SUNEEL GILL, DEACON  
unleashed and lavished into scores of broken lives. From my vantage point, I am able to see deacs fully immerse themselves, *enmasse*, into the struggles of their clients' broken lives, and generously giving of themselves in order to be vessels of God's mercy and love. Each case has its own set of complexities but the vigor, sincerity and gospel-centric approach utilized by deacs in each case is a source of great encouragement to me, providing a glimpse of the future promise of restoration and God's coming kingdom. I invite you to pray for God's leading in the ongoing work of our Diaconate.

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## YES, I WROTE (ANOTHER) BOOK

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and (to him) irresponsible welcome of his younger brother. The father, of course, represents God, and legalists are always offended by the gospel of free grace. They see it as wasteful and unfair. After all, they *worked* for their acceptance. These are the people to whom Jesus was telling the parable in the first place—the Pharisees who objected to Jesus' lavish grace to tax collectors and sinners. They certainly thought Jesus was being far too free and irresponsible with the love and favor he was promising them from God. Jesus depicts them in the parable as the elder brother upset with his father's prodigality.

Second, the positive meaning of the term 'prodigal' is definitely true of God. He spent himself to the uttermost on the Cross. He did so 'recklessly' in the sense that he did not reckon the cost to himself. Jesus was someone who spent himself into helpless poverty (2 Corinthians 8:9) and was 'in want' in the most extreme way.

So the title 'Prodigal God' calls attention not only to the mistaken way that legalists regard God's gospel of grace, but also to how Jesus, though he was rich, spent everything without thought for himself, that we might be saved. Charles Spurgeon's sermon on this text was entitled 'Prodigal

Love for the Prodigal Son,' which sums up well all the senses of the word in one sentence.

During the years I was working on these two books, my provisional titles were "The Gospel for Non-believers" (*The Reason for God*) and "The Gospel for Believers" (*The Prodigal God*.) This second book is my way of doing what Martin Luther directed us Christian ministers to do. "*This...truth of the gospel...is also the principal article of all Christian doctrine, wherein the knowledge of all godliness consists. Most necessary it is, therefore, that we should know this article well, teach it unto others, and beat it into their heads continually.*"

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### REDEEMER REPORT

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Kathy Keller  
Heather Klein

The Redeemer Report is a publication of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church.  
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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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# FROM ISOLATION TO COMMUNITY

BY TOMMY HASKINS

Living in New York City isn't easy. Before I moved to New York in the summer of 2006, there were a lot of things in my life that were "givens." It was a given that my grocery cart and myself would fit down every aisle. It was a given that Mexican restaurants would serve white queso dip. It was a given that newcomers would immediately be recognized and embraced at any and every church, and a community would be thrust upon them.

New York City doesn't recognize most of my givens.

Walking into the East Side eve-night service of Redeemer for the first time, I was overwhelmed at how many people there were. Throughout my first year, I regularly attended services and enjoyed the sermons and the music, but also felt that there was something lacking. I missed the community, the fellowship, the feeling of belonging that had been such a palpable part of every church I had attended outside of New York.

Though I felt like I was growing in spiritual intelligence, I also

felt that the city was starting to consume my life and that I was lacking any semblance of a real community of believers. It became harder and harder to feel excited about Sundays as my disconnect from the church seemed to get deeper. I struggled with my faith, finding myself trying to tackle problems on my own, without other believers to depend on for prayer and support.

I left New York for the summer of 2007 and it was during this summer away that the Lord began to really work on my heart and open my eyes to my own spiritual laziness. Reading through the Gospels, I realized that Jesus had not, in fact, said "Go to church for 75 minutes a week and thy cup shall be filled." Indeed, what Jesus said was "Come, follow me." What He required was pursuit; He mandated active faith. When I returned in the fall of '07 energetic and active faith was my goal.

My first stop was the Redeemer Connect event. It was there that I met Sharon Chan, one of the youth group staff of Redeemer, and discovered the need for male leaders for the

junior high youth group. Just a few weeks later, I was baking hundreds of pies with a bunch of energetic Jr. & Sr. High students, loving life and loving my city. I also joined a Beta group and met other believers who would regularly pray for me and my specific needs. Since then, Redeemer has gotten infinitely smaller. There is an opportunity to hang out with close friends, an opportunity to worship, and an opportunity to rest in the peace and love of Christ.

New York isn't an easy city to live in, but there is a reason that the Lord has called believers to this concrete wonderland. For me, the first reason was to show me that community is not a given; that faith that is stagnant is faith in trouble. The only true way to grow in one's faith is to be active, to seek out opportunities to serve, and to find a community. For people new to Redeemer or who attend on Sundays (but do nothing else), the 2008 Connect event on September 25th is the place to start serving the city, find a sense of belonging and join a caring community.

## GET CONNECTED!

**The 2nd Annual Redeemer Connect Ministry Fair is Thursday, September 25.**

**Where:**

Manhattan Ballroom at 34th St. between 7th and 8th Ave. (7th floor)

**When:**

Doors open at 6:00PM. Event ends at 9:00PM.

**What will happen:**

Lots of great food. Over 200 leaders and volunteers from all of Redeemer's ministries will be on hand to greet and acquaint you with their individual ministries. Dr. Tim Keller will speak at 7:00PM and there will even be some drawings for free stuff.

# HOPE FOR NEW YORK FALL VOLUNTEER FAIR: “SERVING OUR YOUTH”

**Sunday, September 28**

Hope for New York will hold their semi-annual volunteer fair immediately following all five worship services on Sunday, September 28. This year the event will focus specifically on programs that serve at-risk youth in the areas of mentoring, tutoring, coaching, and discipleship.

Please make plans to come by and meet our affiliate staff and volunteers. Come out and learn how you can make a difference in the life of a child and in the future of our city!

*To learn more about volunteering or making a donation, please go to [www.hfnj.org](http://www.hfnj.org).*

## KOINONIA: EXPERIENCE IT THIS FALL

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work, “Hey, do you want to go out and fellowship tonight?” Let’s face it, you just don’t.

In Acts 2:42, Luke gives his readers a description of some of the practices of the early church. He says, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to *fellowship (koinonia)*, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” Most commentators note that the “apostles’ teaching” is something like Bible study or listening to a sermon. The commentators also agree that the “breaking of bread” is most likely shorthand for the Lord’s Supper. But what does Luke mean by “fellowship?”

Fellowship cannot be reduced to, as one writer suggests, “idle chitchat over steaming coffee before or after a worship service.” *Fellowship, on the contrary, is gathering around what we believe and then living out that belief for the world to see.* We believe the apostles’ teaching about Jesus’ death and resurrection; we come together around one table, breaking one loaf of bread to proclaim Christ’s death as a community; and we

pray for our world, our city and our church. *Koinonia* for Luke, then, is the common Christian life recognized in belief and practice.

***Koinonia* = Partnership = Friendship**

In the Apostle Paul’s letter to the church at Philippi we get two more glimpses into the richness of the word *koinonia*. In the opening chapter of that letter he says that every time he prays to God, he prays with joy for the Philippians’ “...partnership (*koinonia*) in the gospel...” (1:5). Usually, when we think of the word “partnership,” it’s difficult for us (especially in New York) to rid our minds of its use in the business world. Yet, we all understand what makes someone a partner: a shared goal. In the *Four Loves* C.S. Lewis captures this when he writes, “Lovers are normally face to face, absorbed in each other; [while] Friends [are] side by side, absorbed in some common interest.” Thus for Lewis: partnership = friendship! And what, according to Paul, was his and the Philippians’ friendship based on?

The good news!

***Koinonia* = Sharing (In)**

Usually when Christians talk about the Holy Spirit, they do so by speaking about Him as though he were divided up into little tiny pieces and distributed among the community of faith. While it is not wrong to say “I have the Holy Spirit,” that statement doesn’t quite capture the profundity of what the Holy Spirit does. In Philippians 2, Paul gives us a glimpse into that profound mystery. There Paul writes, “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any *fellowship (koinonia)* with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.” In Paul’s very concise phrase (“if any fellowship with the Spirit”), he is reminding the church at Philippi that the reason they *are* a Christian community is because they share (*koinonia*) in the Holy Spirit. In other words,

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# REDEEMING AN UPPER WEST SIDE GARAGE

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Standing at 150 W. 83rd Street, between Amsterdam and Columbus, is a typical four story mid-block parking garage. There's a Crunch Gym on one side and a Thrifty Car rental on the other. There's another garage across the street to the north, and several more in the neighborhood. But this garage is different. In a few short years, a transformation will occur to turn the garage at 150 W. 83rd Street into Redeemer's first building—a worship and community center for the neighborhood and Redeemer alike.

As many of you are aware, as a result of the 2005 Vision Campaign, Redeemer entered into a contract to purchase the garage in late November 2006. Part of the contract called for the garage to be given a complete environmental inspection. The inspection showed that some gasoline tanks existed under the basement of the garage. This is typical, as many garages in Manhattan were also gas stations at one time. The owner of the garage went through the proper channels with city and state agencies to remove the gas tanks and prevent the garage from becoming a potential environmental problem for the community.

Just this past month, in August 2008, we received news from NY

State that the environmental cleanup is complete and no further action is required. Redeemer and the owner can now set a closing date for October. Shortly thereafter, Redeemer will begin a two-year construction project to turn the garage into a worship and community center.

Much of the work in the design of the new worship and community center has come from volunteers. A group of volunteer architects worked with the Redeemer staff, interviewing the different ministry groups to identify functional and space needs. Volunteer interior designers developed themes and images to inspire the architect's interior design efforts. Data was collected from the congregation through on-line surveys and focus groups that helped the design team to refine the interior of the new building. Code Green, a sustainable project-consulting group, was hired to give input and direction to help the project obtain LEED Certification.

None of this could have been possible without the prayer and support of the congregation. Teams of people prayed each month as obstacles and roadblocks were put in the way of the project, and then removed. The congregation was faithful in giving to the

vision campaign, and we received many gifts from those who did not even pledge to the campaign.

A town hall meeting is planned for October/November '08 to communicate the progress we have made on the design of the building. Additional information has been posted at [www.redeemer.com/w83](http://www.redeemer.com/w83). We are also planning to create a website to help provide information for our neighbors in the community at [www.150w83.com](http://www.150w83.com)

Now we begin not only the work of the construction project itself, but also, more importantly, the difficult work of defining what Redeemer will become as a result of having a permanent address in the neighborhood. Redeemer plans to begin looking for a new staff member who could act as the Community Center Design Director to help us define the direction for the mid-week use of our space when we open in late 2010, or early 2011. Perhaps there are also ways that we can impact the community as neighbors now—before the building's opening. It would be easy to begin referring to the building as "our new building." Our challenge will be to make 150 W 83rd not just a building for ourselves, but a building for the city.

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## KOINONIA: EXPERIENCE IT THIS FALL

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the Holy Spirit is the glue that joins them together as the community of faith.

So, if you want to learn more about what Christians and Redeemer believe and practice; if you want to develop deep Christian friendships and partner with Redeemer as we serve the

city; if you want to share in the community that the Holy Spirit has established, then the way to do that is by participating in a Beta Group (or a Fellowship Group). Beta Groups are short-term Fellowship Groups that meet for seven weeks beginning this fall. Through worship, Bible discus-

sion, prayer and service you, too, can experience *koinonia*. Whether you've been at Redeemer for a long time or are new to our church, Beta Groups and Fellowship Groups are where *koinonia* happens. To participate go to [www.redeemer.com/betagroups](http://www.redeemer.com/betagroups) or [www.redeemer.com/fg](http://www.redeemer.com/fg)





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## CENTER FOR FAITH & WORK SEPTEMBER CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DATE & TIME	EVENT & LOCATION
Thursday, September 4 at 7:00PM	Legal Evening Fellowship, Redeemer Offices
Friday-Sunday, September 5-7	CFW Fall Retreat at Trinity Conference Center in CT
Thursday, September 11 at 7:00PM	PhD Students, Redeemer Offices
Friday, September 12 at 7:00PM	InterArts Fellowship, Redeemer Offices
Sunday, September 14 at 6:30PM	Health Care Fellowship Dinner
Monday, September 15 at 7:00PM	Entrepreneurs Fellowship, Redeemer Offices
Thursday, September 18 at 8:00AM	Legal Fellowship Breakfast, Redeemer Offices
Sunday, September 21 at 12:00PM	Health Care Fellowship Lunch, Hunter College
Monday, September 22 at 7:00PM	Financial Services Ministry, Redeemer Offices
Wednesday, September 24 at 7:00PM	New Fiction Group, Redeemer Offices
Friday, September 26 at 7:30PM	Higher Education Fellowship, contact <a href="mailto:dmugglin@duke.poly.edu">dmugglin@duke.poly.edu</a>

*Please go to [www.faithandwork.org](http://www.faithandwork.org) for information on all CFW events.*