

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

JUNE 2010

FAITHFULNESS AND MEEKNESS

BY TIM KELLER

In the list of spiritual fruit in Galatians 5:22-23 “faithfulness” and “meekness” are listed next to each other. Faithfulness has to do with the keeping of promises, and the courageous declaration of truth. The Greek word *prautas*, which is translated “meekness” or “gentleness” in Galatians 5:23 means mildness and gentleness in dealing with people. It can mean to be teachable (James 1:21) or just modest, generous, humble, and considerate toward others (1 Corinthians 4:21; 2 Corinthians 10:1; Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:12; James 3:13; 1 Peter 3:15.)

Many Christians today point to Jesus’ thunderous denunciations of the Pharisees (e.g. Matthew 23) as the paradigm of what it means to be faithful to the truth. There Jesus bluntly denounces the sins of the religious leaders. There doesn’t seem to be any evidence of meekness there. Yet at the end of the famous parable of the prodigal son we see the father lovingly imploring the elder brother to come in to the feast.

British expositor Dick Lucas once preached a sermon on that text entitled “Jesus Pleads with his Critics.” The point of

his sermon was striking. Since the elder brother represented the Pharisees to whom Jesus was speaking (Luke 15:1-3,) the appeal of the father to the elder brother is really Jesus pleading with the religious leaders who were going to kill him. He was speaking strongly but tenderly to them, urging them to repent. Here are both faithfulness and graciousness combined.

The most remarkable example of faithful-meekness, however, is Jesus’ words from the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know
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RECOMMENDATIONS WANTED: BETA GROUP LEADERS

- *No Experience Necessary*
- *Only a 7-Week Commitment*
- *Training Provided*
- *Great Short-Term Ministry Opportunity*

If you are currently a leader or volunteer in any capacity at Redeemer, then recommend someone to lead a Beta Group this fall.

Beta Groups begin at the end of September and run for seven weeks. Help us welcome newcomers into our church with leaders to start new Beta Groups!

Go to www.redeemer.com/betagroups/recommendations to recommend someone.



HAVING ALL THINGS IN COMMON

BY LISA HERTZOG, DEACONESS

Acts 2:44-45 says “All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.”

Whenever I read this verse and the rest Acts 2 about the early Christian church, I am struck by how counter-cultural they were in spending their money and time. The phrase “had all things in common” is particularly striking given the fact that these early Christians came “from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5) and spoke all different languages (Acts 2:6-11). The power of the gospel gave them a common identity that superseded their different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. When I read it, I am also challenged with the question of what this means for the current Christian church. Are we modern Christians called to replicate this model of generosity? And if so, how?

Since becoming a deaconess a year ago, I have been blessed to see how the Diaconate* ministry is one way we live out this radical Acts 2 community; it allows the congregation of Redeemer

to share what they have with those among us who are in need. The money given by the congregation to the mercy fund allows the Diaconate to assist those who have lost their jobs or who are going through other difficult situations. That assistance often includes helping with rent, food, transportation, and counseling.

The Christian community described in Acts did not just provide financially but also cared for one another spiritually and emotionally (Acts 2:46-47). Likewise, when people are assisted by the Diaconate, this relationship is not merely a financial one but involves holistic caring for the person’s spiritual, emotional, and physical needs.

Each congregant under Diaconate care works with two deacons and/or deaconesses, and we have the privilege of getting to know our brothers and sisters, praying with them, and encouraging them with the truths from scripture. Many of the congregants I’ve worked with are in positions where they have no one else to turn to and have come to the end of their resources. Some have understandably ques-

tioned where God is in the midst of their suffering. It is a beautiful thing to help them pay their rent and buy food when they didn’t know how they would make it through another month. And when they want to thank me, it is my privilege to point out that this help is due to the generosity of the church body and, ultimately, God. This support reinforces that everything we have is out of God’s love for us.

Serving on the Diaconate has been a reminder that but for the grace of God I could be in the same position as those I am serving. I am just as sinful and as needy for God’s grace as they are. In spite of our different backgrounds and circumstances, they are my brothers and sisters, and we have all things in common due the good news that came through Jesus dying on the cross.

**The Diaconate is Redeemer’s ministry of mercy addressing the needs of those in our church family experiencing hardship. Our service is our response to God’s calling to be merciful, to love and care for one another in practical ways. If you need practical assistance, please call the Diaconate Helpline, (212) 726-1334.*

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REDEEMER REPORT

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

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

IN THE GOSPEL: SEX, SINGLENESS AND MARRIAGE

New York City brings with it a diversity, vibrancy, and pace unrivaled across the U.S. This dynamism lends itself to a dizzying plethora of options and choices, from what kind of ethnic food to try out next, to what sort of arts activities to engage in. For Christians, this endless array of possibilities can contribute to challenges and struggles when it impacts our view of and response to sex, singleness and marriage. We know as believers we are called to live in the city but not be of it, and we are to be an alternative city, one that cannot be hidden. Yet to know how to live differently, we constantly need to be reminded of God's truth and from there work out with one another how we apply it practically.

To encourage us to examine in community how God calls us to live in the areas of sexuality, singleness and marriage, the Fellowship Group Department has developed a new curriculum. It's broad and introductory but gospel-centered, and intended to be both provocative and practical.

In a departure from other studies, it requires greater involvement from group members and includes a multimedia component. Study materials for weeks 1 to 6 will be circulated in advance and group members will be asked to read these before their next meeting. Leaders will then use these readings to facilitate discussions about how to concretely apply the teaching to our urban context.

The study culminates with

BY PAMELA BROWN-PETERSIDE
a video in week 7, entitled "Lives of Hope." Made up of a broad spectrum of Redeemerites who are women and men, single and married, it weaves together various themes including fears, expectations, boundaries, community, practical advice, and reflections. And it provides an opportunity to hear how ordinary people in our midst are concretely applying the gospel in these areas. Designed to be shown in the final week but in three segments, the video includes discussion questions that are tailored to each part.

This new study, including a trailer for the video, will be available on the website for fellowship group leaders in June, making it a perfect option for groups meeting over the summer!

HOPE FOR NEW YORK SPRING BENEFIT

Hope for New York (HFNY) held its Fourth Annual Spring Benefit on Thursday, May 13 at the New York City Fire Museum. This young supporters event encouraged nearly 300 attendees to "Walk with Mercy"—the theme of the evening. Photographs of HFNY's affiliates and volunteers engaging in acts of mercy such as preparing meals or packing homeless care kits were displayed throughout the room. Each attendee was challenged

to 'walk with mercy' by volunteering and giving financially to HFNY's affiliates. One theme that was shared during the evening was how God calls us to engage the city's poor and marginalized. The needs in the city are still great, especially for those living in low-income and poverty-dense communities. Hope for New York is committed to the long haul of engaging these communities with volunteers and financial resources.

Since the event was under-

written by generous donors, all donations made through the Spring Benefit will go directly to programs. If you were unable to attend the benefit but would still like to participate in "Walk with Mercy," please visit www.hfny.org to learn about ways to volunteer and give to Hope for New York. Thank you for supporting our affiliates who are mercifully meeting the needs of underserved communities across the city.

NEW CFW VOCATION GROUPS

The Center for Faith & Work (CFW) is forming three new vocation groups, and relaunching a fourth. New groups will begin meeting soon for those working in the Fashion Industry, in Arts Leadership, and in International Diplomacy. The Dance Industry vocation group will also resume gathering after a year's hiatus.

Vocation groups are created and led by people working in a particular industry, and are served by the Center for Faith & Work. Groups meet regularly to build relationships with and to support others working in our industry, think biblically about issues specific to our industry, and create opportunities to serve others in our community, industry, and culture.

To receive email updates about any of these new groups, or other CFW Vocation Groups, please visit www.faithandwork.org and sign up!

The **Fashion Industry Group** is for designers, ex-

ecutives, managers, photographers, models, retailers, journalists, students, and anyone else actively working in the fashion industry. Email fashion@redeemer.com for more information, and join the email list at www.faithandwork.org to receive more info about an upcoming social event this summer. We're looking for volunteer leaders to help shape and serve this exciting new group!

Those who work for arts organizations or otherwise lead artists or arts ventures are welcome to join the **Arts Leaders vocation group**. They will meet monthly for fellowship, discussion, and prayer, and officially launch on Thursday, September 30, at the Redeemer offices. Prospective group members are also invited to an informal barbecue on July 16 in Queens. For more information email Maria Fee at maria@redeemer.com.

The **International Diplomacy** vocation group will be meeting regularly together to

discuss the joys and challenges of faith and work in the international realm. If you work in international relations or policy, join their first interest meeting on Sunday, June 13, immediately following the ESAM Service at Hunter College. For details please email cfw@redeemer.com.

If you work in the **Dance Industry** as a dancer, choreographer, designer, administrator, journalist or any other function, you are welcome to join their vocation group, which will be having a summer social gathering in late June. To learn more about this group, please Email dancers@redeemer.com

CFW also has vocation groups for those working the advertising industry (The A.D. Agency), business, financial services, health care, and law, as well as for actors, educators, entrepreneurs, filmmakers, Ph.D. students and writers. For more information about these and other CFW programs, visit www.faithandwork.org.

SEE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MAY 16 CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

To see a video recap of the May 16 Congregational meeting, please visit www.redeemer.com/congregationalmeeting. This recap includes a financial report from Brian Stanton, an update on the RENEW Campaign from Tim Keller, as well as a video walk through of the construction progress at the W83 ministry center.

THE GIFT OF “I DO”

BY HOWARD FREEMAN, SR. DIRECTOR, GENEROSITY

I do is what many of us hear in June as we attend weddings, participate in them, or even get married.

The wedding day itself is no small investment. Last year's¹, approximately 2.3 million weddings cost an average of \$31,000 and amounted to a total of \$71 billion. (This figure is equivalent to almost 25% of the \$300 billion given to charity each year by Americans. Full disclosure: my wedding day cost more than a grocery store sheet cake, too!)

Yet, as much money as we spend on the Big Day, it is of no comparison with what God spent when he said, “I do” to us. Romans 8:32 tells us, “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also,

along with him, graciously give us all things?” God has spared nothing in committing himself to us in covenant love, a love that lasts not only for a lifetime, but for all eternity. Further, he has “sealed” us with the Holy Spirit for our wedding day with him, “the day of redemption.” (Ephesians 4:30)

In light of that, here are some ways we can demonstrate our own commitment to God:

Say “I do” to the local church (whether Redeemer or your home church). Give out of each paycheck to support the work of the gospel around us. Volunteer on Sunday during corporate worship or with the Children's Ministry. Consider membership and committing to support Redeemer in its “worship

and work.”

Say “I do” to the poor and marginalized as God did with us! Give your time and money to organizations like Hope For New York and other likeminded agencies.

Say “I do” to one another. Join a Fellowship Group and commit to “one-anothering” your friends. Get involved with a Vocation Group through the Center for Faith & Work and commit to continuing the work of creation through your chosen profession.

The power to love God and one another through gifts like these comes in recognizing that “We love because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

¹Statistics from www.bridalassociationofamerica.com/Wedding_Statistics/

FAITHFULNESS AND MEEKNESS...

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what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34) Here is Jesus saying that what his executioners were doing was *sin*, because it needed forgiveness and atonement. Yet he added, “They don't fully know what they are doing in their blindness.” This is amazing. We don't see Jesus saying, “Father, smite them for what they have done!” nor “Father, forgive those murderous, foul, despicable fools.” Instead he speaks with generosity of spirit toward the people who are wrongly killing him.

The rest of the New Testament leads us by example and direct exhortation to follow Jesus in this. In Galatians 6:1 we are told to not allow people who are “caught in a trespass” to simply go on sinning, but we are only to correct erring people with ‘gentleness.’ 2 Timothy 2 is another case in point. Paul tells Timothy to “keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God,” (v.14) yet in the same chapter says, “The Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead he must be kind to

everyone...those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance...” (v.24-25.)

What does this mean? It means that while there are certainly seasons and situations in which faithfulness means strong speech it also means that an attitude and tone devoid of evident graciousness cannot be the default mode of the Christian. If you are always denouncing and declaring, and never speaking tenderly and generously to those who are

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in error, you aren't combining faithfulness *and* meekness.

There are plenty of Christians today who interpret any effort to speak the truth with meekness to be—by definition—a lack of faithfulness. But Paul says that the two must be combined, and when they are combined it is a sign of supernatural grace in your life.

There are many people today (of a more conservative temperament) who believe that the main problem in the

church is a lack of faithfulness—a lack of forthright speaking of the truth. There are also plenty of people (of a more liberal temperament) that think the main problem is bigotry and prejudice and they believe that Christians should not “condemn” anybody.

But the fruit of the Spirit—the Spirit of Jesus himself—always combines faithfulness and gentleness. No one has a temper or personality that safely balances these traits,

however. Those of us of a more meek temper should be careful not to overly disdain the “faithfulness” crowd, since it *is* always possible that we are slipping into cowardice and compromise. But those of us of a more confrontational temper should also be careful not to overly disdain the “gentleness” crowd, since it *is* possible that we are slipping into pride and self-importance. Let us examine ourselves.