

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

SEPTEMBER 2011

WHY I LOVE GOD'S IMMUTABILITY

BY KATHY KELLER

I hate change. I hated it as a child, when I dressed my Shirley Temple doll in her nicest outfit and sat her on my dresser, never to comb her hair (my sisters did, and it ruined it) or change her clothes (why trade down?) again.

I hated it as a teenager, when I had a bedroom to myself for the first time. I chose the matching curtains and bedspread (blue and green) and the lamps (faux Spanish wrought iron) and once completed, the furniture stayed in the same place and with the same appointments until the house was sold 37 years later!

I hate it even more, now that age is creeping up. Having

turned the corner into my 60's, all I see around me is change. And underneath my dislike of change is a fear of change—maybe what I have today I'll lose tomorrow. Or what comes next may not be a good as what came before.

All of this is caused, of course, because I ground my happiness in circumstances, particularly *stable* circumstances, ones that don't change and therefore don't have the potential to disappoint me. No two proverbs are more terrifying to me than: "This, too, will pass," and what has been described as an ancient Middle Eastern curse: "May you live in interesting times." A curse, indeed.

All that said, it is no surprise that the attribute of God that I find myself clinging to most frequently is his immutability. First a word about divine attributes. These are the classic characteristics of God that theologians have long used to describe the nature of God. They include the *incommunicable* attributes of God (meaning the ones that are his alone) such as omnipotence (he is all-powerful), omniscience (he is all-knowing), and omnipresence (he is present everywhere). Then there are the *communicable* attribute, which, like the flu, are ones we can "catch" by being close to God:

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REDEEMER EAST TO CELEBRATE "CONGREGATIONALIZING" OCTOBER 2

BY LEO SCHUSTER

The past year has been an extraordinary experience for me. I knew that I loved New York before I moved here, but admittedly I knew that only through the lens of a

tourist. While clearly still not a seasoned New Yorker, I could not be more taken by the place and energized by it. What a thrill to live here and get to do gospel ministry in this context!

I've thoroughly enjoyed the opportunities I've had to meet so many of you and minister alongside of you.

As I assume the mantle of
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GOSPEL IN THE CITY

BY REAKSMEY WINSLOW

On August 1, Redeemer City to City hosted an all-day *Gospel in the City* training event for 23 pastors and church planters. They gathered for an intense day of discussion of the content in the 200-page DNA Handbook by Dr. Timothy Keller. (To be published by Zondervan later this year as *Center Church*.) While participants hailed from cities as diverse as Mumbai, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Sydney, Melbourne, and Tasmania, the cultural chemistry of the men in training showed the truth of the adage, “all theology is practical theology.”

Gospel in the City is intended to draw urban leaders into a commitment to gospel renewal in their city and ignite passion for reaching global cities with the gospel. The event is an intensive learning experience that exposes urban leaders to the Gospel DNA.

Of this training the Rev. John Lin said, “I feel a bit overwhelmed and flattered to be a part of a project like this and hope that by God’s grace, I’ll be up for the task. It really is a great privilege to be working

on such a momentous and significant project.”

Pastor Richard Wilson, from Melbourne, commented “I hope we can bring some more Australians along next time to get the Redeemer DNA more established here in Australia, as I believe it has much to offer.



There are so many similarities in the way our societies think about life and the place of Christianity within it.”

The Rev. Bart Garrett from Berkeley, CA added, “I really enjoyed going through the training. I found it very refreshing and re-invigorating to work through these concepts again and to spend time discussing them with other ministers. I am inspired by the Gospel-centered works going on in cities all over Asia.”

City to City Asia, a new sister organization of Redeemer

City to City, will facilitate *Gospel in the City* 2-day events in global cities across Asia and Australia in October, November, January and February. Singapore, Seoul, Hong Kong, Taipei, Sydney, Tokyo, Manila, Mumbai, Delhi, Kuala Lumpur are some of the cities scheduled to host *Gospel in the City* in the coming months.

Singapore is the first city to host an event, scheduled for October 14-15. This event hits close to home owing to an invitation that has been sent to church leaders in Phnom Penh, my birthplace. There

is a great spiritual vacuum here in the aftermath of the Khmer Rouge regime that left the city and her people in ruins for decades. Please be in continued prayer for our *Gospel in the City* trainers and the people in their assigned cities. For my part, it was indeed a blessing to have the opportunity to coordinate the training event for Rev. Jay Kyle and Dr. Stephen Um.

To learn more about Redeemer City to City, please visit our website:

www.redeemercitytocity.com

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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HOW TO GET WELL SOON(ER)

BY JULIET VEDRAL

This past June I had an outpatient surgery for a minor health issue. I was left in a lot of pain and became fairly immobile. As your typical Type-A New Yorker, this was not a pleasant situation in which to find myself (come on, I have things to do and people to see, right?) Even though my parents live nearby, they weren't in a position to nurse me back to health. So what was I to do?

Thankfully, through the combined efforts of some wonderful friends and the Diaconate's Meals Ministry*, I

was able to rest and recover (despite my best efforts to "bounce back" before I was ready). Having home-cooked and healthy meals brought to me gave me one less thing to worry about. Having an acquaintance from the 2010 Gospel in Life course deliver three full bags of fresh produce allowed me to eat well and recover more quickly. And having all this food overflow the refrigerator was a great demonstration to my non-Christian roommates of the love and generosity of the Christian community. I had so

much food, I had to share it and I'm thankful that Chrissie, Faith, Bethany, Marissa, Maureen, Anna Beth and Jenny helped make our church stand out to them!

**The Diaconate is Redeemer's ministry of mercy addressing the needs of those in our church family experiencing hardship. Our Meals Ministry provides meals on a short-term basis to those at Redeemer who are ill or have just had a baby. To receive help through the Meals Ministry, or to become a volunteer, please email us at diaconate@redeemer.com or call (917) 206-1451.*

PARTY FOR GLOBAL CITIES—9/29

If you've been around Redeemer Presbyterian Church long enough, you've probably heard of Redeemer City to City (CTC). But what does CTC actually do? Maybe you've wondered. Maybe you've lost sleep pondering this very question. Okay, probably not... but...

CTC is a non-profit organization started by Redeemer Presbyterian Church to help plant new Christ-centered churches in global cities and also to publish content resources that are available to ministry leaders and individual Christians alike. So far this year, CTC has helped to plant churches in Belfast, Bucharest, Dublin, Durban (South Africa), Kuala Lumpur and here in New York City. CTC has also published *King's Cross* by Tim Keller and the *Gospel in Life* curriculum that will be used this fall as Redeemer becomes four distinct congregations.

But wait, there's more! You can find out more at an event on Thursday, September 29. City to City is hosting a celebration and you and your friends are welcome.

Metropolitan Pavilion, 125 W. 18th St. between 6th & 7th Aves.

6:30PM – Drinks, Hors d'oeuvres & a special art installation

**8:00PM – Quick talk on global city movements by Tim Keller
and global church planters**

For more info about this event, you can visit CTC at www.redeemercitytocity.com, find CTC on facebook, or email 9-29@redeemercitytocity.com. Everyone at CTC hopes to see you at this encouraging and inspiring event.

GOD'S IMMUTABILITY (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

his holiness, love, justice, wisdom, mercy, grace, and righteousness.

God's immutability is one of his incommunicable attributes. We change, but God does not. The scriptures make this clear.

"You remain the same, and

"For one thing, when we see things slipping out of our grasp, we need not mourn their loss."

your years will never end." (Psalm 102:27). "I the Lord do not change." (Malachi 3:6) "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who does not change..." (James 1:17)

God is showing his tender care for his fragile and changeable creatures by stressing his own changelessness. We will have to accept change, whether we like it or not, because in this world nothing stays the same. Change will come, whether we like it or not, whether we plan for it or not, and so we need to anchor our security and happiness firmly in God's unchangeability. He will not be transient. He will not be one way today and another way tomorrow. He doesn't have moods, or bad days, or whims, or "new, improved" anything. Being perfect, any change would be a move away from perfection. He is a burning, shining love: holy, solid, dependable, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Even his personal, covenant name proclaims this: Yahweh can be translated accurately as all of these: *I am who I am. I will be who I will be. I have been what I have been.*

What can this mean to you and me? For one thing, when we see things slipping out of our grasp, we need not mourn their loss. Children grow up. They change from darling little babies to difficult teens and independent adults. Jobs come and go. So do money, fame, looks, health, and every other facet of our reality. But God can be depended upon to be the same loving savior today, tomorrow and into eternity. We can let go of the rest, because we will always have him. Augustine famously said of God, "Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee." As one writer paraphrased it, "only love of the immutable can yield tranquility."

I try to practice this truth by not giving into the very large dollop of sentimentality that makes up my personality. I never saved my children's artwork. I don't take many pictures or keep mementos, because I don't want to find myself sifting through a box of keepsakes and grieving over the past when God is with me in the present. (This doesn't mean, by the way, that scrap-booking or taking photos is

in any way wrong; I just know what a temptation it will be for me personally to look backwards with yearning, rather than forward with anticipation.)

Finally, as Redeemer moves into a new stage of growth, I want to apply this truth to all the changes that many accompany becoming four collegiate congregations. First, change is always a bumpy ride. Not every decision will be the right one, nor will every alteration be for the best. And every change—even the best and right ones—will be experienced by some people as a loss. And yet ultimately our goal is even more of the same, gospel-centered ministry in the future that has born so much fruit in the past. Since we are all brothers and sisters, we can give feedback constructively, but without acrimony or resentment if our suggestions aren't adopted. As one lead pastor recently told me "Feedback is our friend." It was said in a joking tone, but he was serious.

Let us be patient with changes, give them a chance, and not spend time thinking about the "good 'ole days." God will continue to lead Redeemer, and though the scenery may change, he will not.

“FULL HUMANITY” THROUGH GENEROSITY

BY HOWARD FREEMAN

In his book *Common As Air*, Kenyon College professor Lewis Hyde describes how Americans shifted during the early 19th century from being concerned about the common good to what he calls “possessive individualism.”

Referring to political theorist Hannah Arendt’s claim that those in early Greece and Rome were said to enter “full humanity” only when they actively contributed to the common good through public service (in the broad sense), Professor Hyde notes how the American transcendentalists, led by Ralph Waldo Emerson, moved from the communalism of the country’s founders to self-reliance and even removal from society itself, romanticized in works like *Walden*.

Hyde writes, “We became free to decline external demands....The individual’s identity arose not from attachments but from refusals.” The “Me Generation” did not start

twenty years ago but rather more like 170 years ago.

So, what of generosity?

The story of Jesus’ life and death typifies the communal vs. possessive individualistic dichotomy: He was the Sent One, by the Father, and he obeyed unto death. He was tempted with owning the world’s kingdoms by the devil who, a possessive individualist, wanted Jesus to worship him. On the cross, Jesus’ body was broken and his relationship with the Father was severed, so that our local bodies could be made whole and we could be re-connected with God and each other.

Therefore, each of us has opportunities to connect and serve in community, such as affiliating with a congregation, becoming a member, joining a Fellowship Group, a Catalyst Group or attending a Catalyst Night, or volunteering on Sunday or with our small group at a Hope For New

York affiliate agency.

For we are truly only fully human, and generously so, when we have died to self, love one another, and serve the city in community.

To learn about joining Redeemer or affiliating with a congregation, visit:

www.redeemer.com/about_us/membership_and_baptism/

To learn about Catalyst, send an email to:

fg@redeemer.com

To learn about Fellowship Groups, visit:

www.redeemer.com/connect/fellowship_groups/

To volunteer through Hope For New York, visit:

www.redeemer.com/serve/hope_for_new_york.html

To volunteer on Sunday, and learn more about Sunday Service Ministries, visit:

www.redeemer.com/serve/sunday_service_ministries/

CELEBRATE “CONGREGATIONALIZING” (CONT’D FROM PAGE 1)

responsibility as the Lead Pastor of the East Side congregation, I’m especially aware of the importance of seeing ministry as a partnership. As the body of Christ, the church is an organism of people whom the Spirit has brought together for his gospel purposes. The active participation of each one of us is essential for the body to function as it should. When

a part of our physical body doesn’t function as designed, the body is disabled.

Something similar is at stake spiritually with the body of Christ. As a pastor, I suppose I’ve always believed this to be true, but I’ve never sensed as acutely I do now the indispensable nature of this great biblical truth. For those of you who will be part of the East Side

congregation, thank you in advance for embracing this ideal with fresh zeal. Your partnership means everything to me and, more importantly, it will mean everything in terms of the future of this church. Thank you also for praying that Jesus would be pleased to continue to build his church here in New York through us

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CELEBRATE “CONGREGATIONALIZING” (CONT'D FROM PAGE 5)

that this great city and its inhabitants might experience renewal.

Redeemer's East Side worship site will become a distinct congregation on Sunday, October 2. With this, the process of transitioning from one to four congregations will officially be underway. A day we as a church have anticipated for so long is finally beginning to unfold as a reality. It's a day I've been looking forward to ever since my family and I moved to New York City a year ago.

The first effects of this “congregationalizing” is that there will be a closer connection between the congregation and the lead pastor, which on the East side will be me. Although Tim will continue to preach as much as he ever did, I will be the worship leader and preach on the days he is elsewhere. I will also be meeting with those of you who need to talk to a pastor, want to become more involved, and have ideas for outreach and service on the East side.

As Redeemer East Side becomes a distinct congregation on October 2, it will be a day of dedication and celebration for all of Redeemer, not just the East Side. In each of the worship services we will pray for the East Side congregation and the congregations that will be established on the West Side and Downtown in 2012. Both the morning and evening services on the East Side will be especially dedicated to the occasion. A special reception will follow both the 10:30AM & 6:00PM services.