

MARCH 2013

SOUND DOCTRINE

BY TIM KELLER

Paul wrote the letters we refer to as 1st and 2nd Timothy to his young colleague Timothy, who had been tasked with organizing house churches into functioning congregations. Paul hoped to be there to assist Timothy in person, but just in case he was delayed he wrote: *Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:14-15)*

The directions given to Timothy, therefore, are applicable to all churches in general, and so also to us. And one of the first topics Paul instructs Timothy

about is to “command certain people not to teach false doctrines... (1:3) and “whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine that conforms to the gospel...” (1:11)

We live in an age in which the very word ‘doctrine,’ or worse, ‘dogma,’ is a negative term. And yet it is simply impossible to live without doctrinal beliefs. While many do not want to use the term, all people—secular as well as religious—treat some views as horrific heresies. I have encountered churches that claim, “We don’t teach doctrine, we just preach Jesus.” But the moment you ask them—“Well, who is Jesus, and what did he do?”—the only way to answer

is to begin to lay out doctrine.

But Paul does not simply say that right doctrine is necessary, but it is “sound.” The Greek word Paul uses here means healthy rather than diseased. This is Paul’s way to say that wrong doctrine eats away at your spiritual health. Or, to say it another way, if you lack spiritual vitality and fruit, if you are not courageous enough, or joyful enough, or if you are not filled with love and hope, it may be because your grasp of Biblical doctrine is shallow and thin, or distorted and mistaken.

This came home forcibly to me many years ago when I spent a number of weeks working through a Bible study on
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EASTER SACRIFICIAL OFFERING FOR HFNY

Redeemer will receive the annual Easter Sacrificial Offering for Hope for New York, our mercy and justice outreach to the city, during all services on Easter Sunday, March 31.

100% of the gifts received from this offering will be given to our affiliate organizations that support various New York City populations, including at-

risk youth, low-income families, immigrants, the homeless, and the elderly.

Hope for New York is also accepting online donations and checks (payable to “Hope for New York”) sent to Hope for New York, 1359 Broadway, Suite 410, New York, NY, 10018.

In addition, you might also consider making regular gener-

osity to the poor a part of your life with ‘The Hope Exchange,’ HFNY’s committed monthly giving program. You can join at www.hfny.org/hope-exchange.

Please pray that our congregation would be moved to give generously on Easter Sunday, and please also prayerfully consider how you might support Hope for New York’s efforts to serve the poor of our city.

MORE THAN A THEOLOGY CLASS

BY MIRIAM G., GOTHAM CLASS OF 2013

“Gotham is the best thing I’ve done in years.” It’s what I said to four nodding members of my Gotham cohort when we were out to dinner last Saturday night. So what is Gotham, that it could bring five busy professionals together on a Saturday night, and evoke in us such unanimity?

If you look at the Gotham website, you will learn that **Gotham is a nine-month intensive theological and leadership training program.** And so it is. **But it’s so much more than that.** It is a class, a community, and in a way a greenhouse, where young professionals, artists, teachers, and others come together and see who God is in the daily realities of our lives. It’s affected everything about my life—my work, my friendships, the way I spend my spare time.

And I almost didn’t apply. My application to Gotham was a desperate act of last resort. After years of schooling and having embarked on a career in law, I applied a sandpaper scrubbing of logic and reason to nearly every tenet in my life. Yet somehow, as I questioned my assumptions more and more, my faith remained oddly “sacred.” It was set apart

from the intellectual rigor—it was true because it had to be, and so therefore it was. But in the quiet moments, I admitted to myself the true reason I avoided applying strict scrutiny to my faith. I was terrified that, if I asked the questions, I would find no satisfactory answers. If my faith didn’t satisfy my reason, if I discovered my theological grounding was a lie, what would I have left? I was on the edge when I applied to Gotham and thankfully, mercifully, God met me where I was.

Through Gotham I have seen theological concepts go from words on a page to principles for daily living. In the safe, heavily curated confines of the Gotham curriculum I have begun to ask the questions that I never could bear to ask. And I’ve been rewarded with answers that far surpass anything I once insisted must be true. I have seen my faith put into a systematic framework that stands up to scrutiny, that has logical progression and cohesion, and that has a fascinating, deep richness that even my “beloved” law books can’t match.

To my surprise, I have discovered that Gotham is more than a theology class. It is spiri-

tual boot camp, where each Fellow’s growth is deliberately, intensely stimulated. Through the readings and by living life together with the incredible Gotham community, I have learned to see and comprehend the depth of my sin and brokenness. I have learned experientially that there is no hope for change or healing outside of the Gospel. And I have learned that the Gospel does not discriminate. As it has become more integrated into certain areas of my life, I see change and healing everywhere. My intellect and reason, which are built on such a hyper-rationalist foundation, are being strengthened by God’s brilliant logic and redeeming framework.

The Gotham experience has stretched me and changed me, and I think it will continue to do so over the years that may be ahead. And that is why Gotham is the best thing my cohort-mates and I have done, as believers, as professionals, and as New Yorkers.

The final info session for next year’s applicants is Sunday, March 10 after the 9:30AM Downtown service.

Visit www.gothamfellowship.org for more information.

REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller
Heather Klein

Hunter College Auditorium
East 69th St.
(between Park & Lexington)
Services at
10:30AM & 6PM

W83rd Ministry Center
150 W. 83rd St.
(between Columbus & Amsterdam)
Services at
9:15AM, 11:15AM, 5PM, 7PM

Salvation Army Auditorium
120 W. 14th St.
(between 6th & 7th Aves.)
Services at
9:30AM & 5PM

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DOWNTOWN CONGREGATION SECURES NEW MEETING SPACE AT 120 W. 14TH ST.!

By JOHN LIN

We are thrilled to announce that we have finalized an agreement with The Salvation Army to use their facility from now through the end of the summer, which includes an auditorium for 1300 people, a fellowship hall and space for our children's ministry!

Our larger and more consistent space will create even more

room for friends and neighbors, which we couldn't be happier about. Since our first service in October, we have surveyed over 100 potential spaces, lost a venue we had hoped to rent, and worshipped in 5 different spaces (which we outgrew!) While it has been a tumultuous ride, we have seen God be faithful in unmistakable ways every single week.

It is my prayer that our congregation would serve our neighbors in need, provide a venue to explore Christianity and work for the flourishing of Downtown. Please join us as we praise God for His provision and as we anticipate what He will do in the months to come. Services at 9:30AM and 5:00PM.

STORIES FROM *DON'T WALK BY*

During the *Don't Walk By* outreach last month, hundreds of volunteers—including teams from all three Redeemer congregations—canvassed to the city to provide resources to the people living on the streets.

Redeemer Downtowner Elizabeth Elliott volunteered for *Don't Walk By* for the first time this year. She writes that the outreach has changed the way she views her homeless neighbors:

This was the first time I've participated in Don't Walk By, but I had heard from friends that I didn't need to bring anything except extra layers and a willingness to speak to strangers.

As a total extrovert, I wasn't nervous about approaching someone on the street—especially since we had excellent help and services to offer as provided by the hospitality team back at the base church.

But committing to engage with the homeless made me

think about the future: how would stopping this time, instead of walking by, change the way I commute everyday? Could I go back to putting on blinders to the need in my own neighborhood?

When we received our city coordinates that Saturday, I had to laugh with the Lord: He knew my hesitancy, and put our team (which was mostly made of my Community Group) in the area near Union Square and St Marks Place, right outside my front door! I met many people that evening who call "home" the streets close to my home.

Now, weeks later, I can't say that my commute has been changed dramatically, except for one young woman in particular, I say "hello" when I see her and try to have extra food that I can offer. I am not sure how long she will "live" in the area (like so many transient acquaintances in New York), but for now, I am glad to be of small

service and thankful to Hope for New York and Don't Walk By for providing the opportunity!

Interested in how you can serve homeless populations throughout the year through Hope for New York? Here are just a few ways!

Pick up a handful of resource cards—cards to hand out to people living on the street that list places to go to for food, clothing, shelter—at the info table after a Redeemer service.

Volunteer with organizations that serve men and women in need. Find a full listing of these organizations on our website at <http://hfnny.org/adult-recovery/>.

Pray for your homeless neighbors, that God would provide for those in need, that God's people would demonstrate love and compassion to them, and that they would experience the renewal of Christ's grace and love.

EI FORUM—*RISK: FAITH OR FOLLY?*

BY CALVIN CHIN

Putting aside the occasional storm of the century or most recent Hollywood end-of-world movie, how often do you think about RISK? Do you wake up wanting to take more risks, or wondering how to avoid it? How do you even define risk?

As a community of believers and people who are seriously investigating the bold claims of Jesus, we should regularly ponder this notion of risk in our lives. Culturally, we tend to romanticize risk as something taken on by potentially heroic people hoping to receive a great reward. But rather than looking to culture to define risk for us, perhaps we can instead discern how risk is defined in light of the gospel.

When God calls people to take on small or big tasks, they are not promised comfort, success, or even the continuation of earthly life! In fact, the call to follow Christ is defined in terms of risk. Jesus himself warns us in Luke 14:27-33 to

seriously consider the cost of being his disciple!

Why does he use an entrepreneurial endeavor—building a tower—to illustrate the risk of following him? Building a tower in Manhattan is something that happens all the time, but in biblical times building a tower was a rare yet very public project. A large project would have required a vision to attract the pooled resources of a community. You had to invest and risk important resources such as your name, your family's name, money, time and relationships in order to bring about gains to society. If you failed, aside from the losses and debt to others, you'd be mocked and look foolish.

But the great paradox of the gospel is this, that while we are being asked to “risk” our lives in faithful service to Christ, it is because he first willingly laid down his life for ours. Whether or not our earthly risks succeed or fail, do we see the beauty of the gospel freeing us to take

them—trusting that the ultimate outcome rests in the hands of a Sovereign God who cares intimately about the flourishing of individuals, communities, and, yes, the entire world? And not only does he care about this flourishing, he transforms us so that our faithful venturing might somehow play a part in his work of renewal!

In every endeavor we undertake, as entrepreneurs, investors, and workers across every sector of society, upon what are we basing our risk assessment? Only by looking at the cross are we transformed to take on risk as part of our faithful response to the love of the Father—to go where he calls us, to work in the field he's placed us, to build new ventures, to materialize visions, and to serve out of an overflow of love. Are you equipped to correctly define, assess, approach, and deal with risk? Join our Ei community for this year's Forum on April 5-6 as together, we consider *RISK: Faith or Folly*.

SOUND DOCTRINE... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

the attributes of God by Warren and Ruth Myers. What was so revealing were a couple of application questions: 1) What specific false thoughts or disturbing emotions hinder me when I don't trust (fully grasp) that God has this particular attribute? 2) Although my conscious mind may agree that God has this attribute, does my outward life demonstrate that

he is like this? (*Experiencing God's Attributes*, NavPress, 1978.)

Try these questions out on the glory and majesty of God, the wisdom and sovereignty of God, the love and mercy of God. Spend time thinking and you will begin to see that many of our most personal and practical problems are doctrinal ones. Either we don't grasp the truth, or we don't connect

it to our lives so that it creates 'soundness,' or spiritual health in us.

I've always been impressed by the contrast between contemporary strategies for coping with stress, and Paul's counsel for how to get inner peace. Modern approaches tell you to take time off, get a better work-leisure balance, to block
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NEW YORK CITY PASTORS GATHER MONTHLY AT WEST 83RD MINISTRY CENTER

BY CLARA LEE

What does it mean to be a faithful church in New York City? How do we hold to sound biblical doctrine while embodying and communicating that doctrine in a fruitful way?

These are a few of the questions that were posed to 250 New York City pastors and full-time ministry workers in November at the first of a series of monthly gatherings. The events are being held at the West 83rd Ministry Center, and are sponsored by Redeemer Presbyterian Church and Redeemer City to City.

Tim Keller's recent book for pastors, a ministry textbook called *Center Church*, is being provided free to all participants and serves as the syllabus for the gatherings, covering topics such as Theological Vision and Contextualization. Each event includes a talk and Q&A by Tim Keller and a testimony or panel discussion featuring other pastors from the five boroughs.

For example, at a recent event Richard Rivera shared how his church plant Res-

toration Bronx was trying to embody the gospel by being a safe space in the South Bronx, deemphasizing pastoral titles or church authority and simply pointing people to rest in Christ. At another, David Ellis, pastor of Astoria Community Church, shared the burden and potential damage of preaching and pastoring without an understanding of grace.

One attending pastor commented, "It's one thing to read about ministry philosophy and practice; but the combination of learning about it, seeing it carried out in ministry, and then seeing it applied in a way that directly and personally benefits me as a pastor in another church is highly impactful. Thanks for not only doing gospel-centered ministry, but applying it in a way that multiplies it into other churches."

We hope these events will strengthen the relationships among pastors in the city, as well as bring about new partnerships in church planting and ministry. Robert Guerrero, the NYC Church Planting Cata-

lyst for City to City, has planted churches in Chicago and the Dominican Republic. He observes, "This is a space in the city where pastors and leaders of diverse traditions and ministry contexts are coming together to be challenged in their thinking and practice around what it means to be Church in such a dynamic and challenging place like NYC. Dr Keller's teachings on the topics of his recent book *Center Church* are not only practically formative and challenging, but deeply thought provoking."

If you are a pastor or full-time ministry worker in New York City, or know one who might like to attend, please contact Clara Lee at claral@redeemercitytocity.com to find out more about these events. Our vision is to see churches and gospel ministry multiplied throughout the city, across denominations, boroughs, cultures and classes, unified in their vision and able to reach far more New Yorkers than any individual church—or type of church—could reach alone.

SOUND DOCTRINE... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 4)

negative and guilty thoughts, to exercise and learn relaxation techniques.

Modern books never tell stressed people: "Think about the big questions of life. Where are we from? Where are we going? What is the meaning of life?"

But Paul says, "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable...think about such things...And the God of peace will be with you. (*Philippians 4:8-9*). In effect Paul is saying: "Think! God made the world

and we turned from him—but he's come back to save us at infinite cost to himself. And some day he will put everything right and we will live with him forever. If you really understood and believed that, nothing could get you down for long. So think.

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UPDATE: ELDER, DEACON AND DEACONESS NOMINATIONS

As Redeemer members, you have the privilege and responsibility to nominate and elect your fellow members to serve on the Session and the Diaconate. This past November the Session and Diaconate accepted nominations for the roles of elder, deacon and deaconess. Thank you for sending in your nominations! The following members have been nominated and have begun the process of training and evaluation.

Downtown Nominees

Bruno Assante (Elder)
Steve Brown (Deacon)
Lori Fischer (Deaconess)
Grace Monger (Deaconess)
Emily Thiesen (Deaconess)
Aurora Warfield (Deaconess)

East Side Nominees

Jay Easterling (Elder)
John Ellis (Elder)
Payten Jenkins (Deacon)
Jeff Kermah (Deacon)
Carol Labozzetta (Deaconess)
Liza Martinez (Deaconess)
Tom Palumbo (Deacon)
Brendon Straub (Deacon)
Carrie Robinson (Deaconess)

West Side Nominees

Erik Anderson (Elder)
Elizabeth Carr (Deaconess)
Daniela Italo (Deaconess)
Katie Kuperus (Deaconess)
Pamela Mason (Deaconess)
Drew Melton (Deacon)
Katherin Park (Deaconess)

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 elder or deacon/ess. Our current elders will then determine which individuals will be presented for election at the May congregational meeting. If you have questions about the nomination, evaluation and training process, please contact Jenny Chang at (917) 206-1407 or jenny@redeemer.com

SOUND DOCTRINE... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 5)

If you are discouraged, think about and take hold of Christian doctrine until it puts some health and peace into you.”

In short, the world tells you

to get peace by not thinking too hard; Christianity tells you that you get peace by thinking very hard, and learning, grasping, rejoicing in, and resting in

the truths and doctrines of the Word of God.

So learn Biblical doctrine—for your health.