

APRIL 2013

CHANGE AND GRACE: PART 1

BY TIM KELLER

For decades Kathy and I have profited immensely from the pastoral wisdom of the converted slave trader John Newton. As an 18th century Anglican minister, Newton was a good preacher, but it was as a pastor, counselor, and advisor that he excelled. His pastoral letters are a treasure chest. In one of his letters (entitled “Some Blemishes on Christian Character”) Newton points out that while most Christians succeed in avoiding more gross sins, many do not actually experience much in the way of actual spiritual growth.

Newton lays out a very convicting and specific example of the kinds of Christian people who coast on their strengths but do nothing about their weaknesses and so rob them-

selves and others of joy and God of his glory. These blemishes are often seen by their bearers as mere “foibles.” Newton says they “may not seem to violate any express command of Scripture” and yet, they are “properly sinful” because they are the opposite of the fruit of the Spirit that believers are supposed to exhibit.

These “small faults” mean that large swaths of the Christian population have little influence on others for Christ. This is true because, while our faults always seem small to us due to the natural self-justification of the heart, you can be sure they don’t look so small to others.

Over the years I’ve gone back again and again to this list in the manner he directs to use in my own personal self-

examination (not as a way to find fault with others!) As I have done so I’ve seen things in myself that I’ve sought to stamp out with God’s grace. And as I’ve worked through the list I’ve expanded it—often breaking some of his larger categories into smaller ones in order to be more incisive.

Here I’ll share my expanded list—based heavily on his Newton’s original one. Since Newton gave each case study a slightly humorous Latin name, I’ve done the same.

Austerus is a solid and disciplined Christian but abrasive, critical and ungenerous in dealing with people, temperamental, seldom giving complements and praise, and almost never gentle.

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HFNY YOUNG SUPPORTERS SPRING BENEFIT

Celebrate with Hope for New York at the Young Supporters Spring Benefit on Thursday, May 9, at Broad Street Ballroom!

Join other young professionals in their 20’s and 30’s for food, drinks, and a special program to learn more about the work Hope for New York is doing to serve the poor and marginalized in our city.

Find out more at <http://hfny.org/spring-benefit>

A REALLY GOOD STORY

BY AMELIA PETERSON, 2013 EI BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION WINNER

*Stories make us more alive, more human,
more courageous, more loving.*

– Madeleine L'Engle

From what I can tell, a really good story usually involves some moment of hopeless impossibility, followed by a resolution that is both unpredictable and inevitable. The audience, and often the characters in the story, come to the resolution thinking, “I never would have guessed that we’d find ourselves here, but of COURSE it would come to this. I’d have it no other way.” In the life of a small NYC theatre company, these moments are not infrequent.

The story of Firebone Theatre has become markedly more interesting since God began pulling us into Redeemer’s Center for Faith and Work. Up until this year, Firebone Theatre has been held together by a few dedicated artists and lots of prayer. After our last production we felt like the wind had been completely knocked out of us by whole experience, positive though it was. The romance of our story was fading, and we were starting to realize that we would need some serious support if this company was going to make it in NYC.

At the suggestion of some friends, my husband and I entered Firebone Theatre in Redeemer’s Entrepreneurship Initiative Business Plan Competition. A BFA in Theatre Studies and an MFA in Acting didn’t quite prepare us for the challenges of running a business. We’ve managed thus far with some street smarts and a lot of help from friends.

When we began attending business entrepreneurship workshops at Redeemer, we felt like we’d been given admission to an Entrepreneurship 101 course with some of the best leaders in Manhattan as our professors. The Business Plan Competition served as a boot camp for us as we were forced to craft our story and mission into a four page proposal, then a sixteen page business plan, and finally a six-minute presentation.

We are still shaping our mission, and we’ve had incredible mentors helping us find a clear and consistent way to communicate who we are both in and outside of the church. One of

these mentors, Kenyon Adams, invited us to attend Redeemer’s “In the Living Room” series for artists. Entering this community of artists, all talking about what it means to know Christ in their work, was a breath of fresh air. One of our favorite evenings with this new community was when Makoto Fujimura came to speak about the Artist as Theologian. He told us the story of creating a painting based on the scripture “Jesus wept.” He reminded us that when Jesus cried with Mary and Martha over the death of their brother Lazarus, He already knew He had the power to raise Lazarus from the dead. He could have just fixed the problem. His tears were not practical or sensible. They were extravagant. And in that moment, his tears were exactly what was needed. Mako showed us that this is where the artist lives. In the impractical extravagance of the tears of an all-powerful God.

God is slowly changing the fabric of our theatre company as He weaves these bits of

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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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Office: 1359 Broadway, 4th Fl., New York, NY 10018-7102
(212) 808-4460 (T) (212) 808-4465 (F) www.redeemer.com

STORIES OF CHANGED LIVES THROUGH HOPE FOR NEW YORK

Clients from Hope for New York affiliate organizations shared stories of Gospel restoration and hope at Redeemer services over Palm Sunday and Easter.

A few of their stories are excerpted below:

EVA

CLIENT, THE BOWERY MISSION WOMEN'S CENTER

When I came to the Bowery Mission, for the first time I felt like everything would be OK. I realized that God still loved me—that he had not abandoned me, but that He sent His son Jesus to be near to me and save me. I found that I began to understand what I was reading in God's Word. I saw a thread in the trials of people in the Bible, and saw how God brought them through, and that, because I trust in Jesus for my salvation and hope, He would bring me through!

ANDREW

CLIENT, BROOKLYN TEEN CHALLENGE

When I walked through the doors of Teen Challenge, I was consumed with doubts and fears. Will my wife fall out of love with me? Will my son not recognize me? Who will provide financially for my family? Will God really change me? I can tell you that in only five months God has already gone above and beyond my expectations. He is teaching me what it means to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. My eyes are being opened to the fact I can do nothing on my own. I don't know how to be obedient or respectful. I don't even know how to truly love my own wife and son. My very desire to seek God is not even my own. Everything I have today is because of God's grace and what he has offered me in Jesus, and because he has given me the power of the Holy Spirit.

TJ

CLIENT, NEW YORK CITY RESCUE MISSION

At the darkest moment of my life, I entered into the residential recovery program at the NYC Rescue Mission. My sister was familiar with the Mission, and she saw that I had nothing left for life, I saw no hope of recovery, and I felt no spiritual faith at all. Since entering the Mission, I have realized that God never abandoned me, but that I had abandoned Him. During a step class taught at the mission, I realized my need for Jesus to forgive my sins and give me a new life, and so I gratefully turned my life over to Him. It turns out He was what I have been missing in my life.

We praise God for the work He is doing through Hope for New York's affiliate organizations, and we are so grateful to those in our church who gave generously and sacrificially to this work through the Easter Sacrificial Offering.

HOW TO BE HAPPY AT REDEEMER

BY KATHY KELLER

The term “church shopping” is high on my list of odious phrases. It denotes a consumer mindset and suggests that you should not settle in a community of believers until you find the perfect match. Since perfect matches do not exist in the realm of community any more than they do in the realm of romance, this is an endeavor doomed to produce restless, unsatisfied congregants.

That said, believers *do* need to belong to a community where they share the doctrine, vision, and philosophy of ministry held by that local body. Further, they need to be able to respect and support their leaders, who are “keeping watch over their souls” (Hebrews 13:17). It is therefore important that any prospective new member of a local church (or even a fully assimilated long-time member, for that matter) be cognizant of the core values of the body with which they are affiliating/ed.

Redeemer was founded on the principle that “we are not a church for ourselves, but for

people who don’t like church.” From the very first days until now, 24 years later, that commitment has been the foundation beneath all of Redeemer’s priorities. We have never sought to gather those who already believe, or take people away from other churches, but to address the secular, skeptical New Yorker who would ordinarily not attend church.

Because of this foundational commitment, God has given Redeemer the rare gift of being able to communicate the gospel plausibly and persuasively to people in the most difficult to reach demographic in the country. But this comes with a price. It means that we must always remind ourselves that we *inside the church* are not to put our own likes, dislikes, priorities and personal agendas ahead of the needs of those *outside the church*. This is difficult to the point of being nearly impossible, as the needs and desires of members (for programs and budget and training and attention from leaders) will always be more visible and voluble

than the needs of people who aren’t even there and mostly are unable to articulate their spiritual needs.

Over the years I have talked to many, many people who have said, “Well, I don’t like the way Redeemer does _____ (fill in the blank with “worship, music, children’s ministry, support groups,” or any number of things), but I know I can bring my unbelieving family, friends and co-workers here and they’ll hear the gospel in a way they won’t if I take them to the kind of church I like.”

The corollary, of that, friends, is that we must *all* be prepared to accept a certain level of dissatisfaction with some aspects of Redeemer, if those are the result of our outward-facing stance. In fact, you will only be happy at Redeemer if your first priority is not your own happiness, but the joy of seeing skeptical people encounter the gospel and be brought to new life in Christ. Compared to that we must consider our complaints about not having things all our way as insignificant.

CHANGE AND GRACE... (CONT’D FROM PAGE 1)

Infialis is person of careful and deliberate character but habitually cynical, negative, and pessimistic, always discouraging (“that will never work”), unsupportive and vaguely unhappy.

Pulsus is passionate, yes, but also impulsive and impa-

tient, not thinking things out, speaking too soon, always very quick to complain and lodge a protest, often needs to apologize for rash statements.

Querulus is a person of strong convictions, but known to be very opinionated, a poor

listener, argumentative, not very teachable, and very slow to admit they were wrong.

Subjectio is a resourceful and ambitious person, but also someone who often shades the truth, puts a lot of spin on things (close to misrepresenta-

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AUTISM AND YOUR CHURCH

BY CAROLINE YOON

On Saturday, February 2, 2013, Redeemer Family Ministries hosted a workshop by Barbara Newman, a special educator and widely-known Christian speaker from CLC Network near Grand Rapids, Michigan. Barbara spoke to an audience of around 80 people at the W83 Ministry Center about how to adapt worship, teaching and fellowship to include and love families affected by autism.

Workshop attendees came from all five boroughs of NYC, Long Island, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Virginia and even Kansas. Attendees learned about the biblical basis for reaching out to, and including, people with ASD and other disabilities; the specific symptoms of autism

spectrum disorder (ASD); and how to better serve people who have ASD in their congregations. Participants were able to brainstorm, ask questions, buy books and other resources, affirm each other's ministry and pray together about this complex issue in our communities. Participants felt God's love and Spirit working throughout the day in the hearts of all who attended!

The workshop was co-sponsored by MNA Special Needs Ministries (a PCA organization providing evangelism and outreach support to churches), Young Life Capernaum (the special needs ministry of Young Life), New York Christians for Parents of Children with Autism (NYCPCA) and

Redeemer Family Ministries.

Redeemer is one of the few churches in New York City that has a ministry for children with special needs. Mustard Seeds is a self-contained classroom with a small child-to-adult ratio currently in its third year of operation during the Eastside AM service. Mustard Seeds children have varying disabilities, including autism, that prevent them from being able to learn in an integrated classroom. Planning is underway to start a Mustard Seeds West during one of the morning services on the West Side. For more information about Mustard Seeds, please email mustardseeds@redeemer.com.

MARRIAGE CHECKUP

BY LAUREN GILL, EAST SIDE MINISTRY COORDINATOR

On Sunday, May 5, the East Side congregation will hold a class called Marriage Checkup to help married couples assess if their marriage is the ministry that it should be. Our source material will come from Tim and Kathy Keller's book *The Meaning for Marriage* and Paul Tripp's *What Did You Expect?*

The foundation of the class comes from a quote by Tripp which says, "The problem in our marriages is not first that we don't love one another enough; no, the problem is that we don't love God enough, and because we don't love God enough,

we don't love one another as we should." With this in mind, we will encourage participants not just to look at their marriages but all of their relationships and ask, "What is it about my relationship with God right now that is making me less patient/loving/compassionate/kind to those around me? Where am I not loving Him as I should?"

The symptoms that play out in our relationships are indicators of where we are in our love for God. When we react to others in sinful ways, we often blame the other person for "causing" that reaction

in us. But this is a wrong way of thinking. Those sinful reactions were already in us and the circumstances of the relationship have just revealed them to us.

This insight is helpful when we are offended in relationships other than marital ones. If my friend, or parent, or child hurts me in some way, it is not personal. Our life is being affected by the fallen nature of the other person.

Because the essence of marriage is a covenant, we want to create a place where we can help to sanctify one another.

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tion), is very partisan, self-promoting, and turf conscious.

Potestas gets things done, but needs to control every situation, has trouble sharing power, has a need to do everything him or herself, and is very suspicious and mistrustful of others.

Fragilis is friendly and seeks friends, but constantly gets feelings hurt, easily feels slighted and put down, is often

offended and upset by real and imagined criticism by others.

Curiosus is very sociable, but enjoys knowing negative things about people, finds ways of passing the news on, may divulge confidences, and enjoys confronting too much.

Volatilis is very kind-hearted and eager to help, but simply not reliable—isn't punctual, doesn't follow through on promises, is always

over-extended, and as a result may do shoddy work.

Look at these and ask which one or two most describe you. Have the courage to ask someone else you know, too. In future installments we'll look both at why so many of us seem to be stuck in these character flaws instead of growing and changing to be of more godly character.

MARRIAGE CHECKUP... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 5)

We want the other person to grow in Christlikeness. The best way for us to do this in marriage or any relationship is to be

in love with Jesus ourselves so we can sacrificially love those in the way he has loved us.

The Marriage Checkup class

was held for East Side parents in March and we look forward to opening this opportunity up to the entire congregation.

A REALLY GOOD STORY... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 2)

brokenness, redemption, theology and community into our identity. We are continually astounded by the incredibly artistic way in which our Creator

works. We are confident that in the end, we will look back and say, "We never would have guessed...but of COURSE!" God could easily spare us from

the hopeless impossibility of growing a theatre company in New York City, but then what kind of story would we have to tell?