

JUNE 2013

## CHANGE AND GRACE: PART 3

BY TIM KELLERS

I have noticed over the years that some ministries, in their effort to stress holiness of life, do not put a great deal of emphasis on God's gracious acceptance of us despite our sins. And other ministries, in their effort to avoid legalism and rejoice in grace, are reluctant to call people to close, exacting self-examination and deep repentance. But the 18th century pastor John Newton is remarkable in giving equal weight to self-examination and grace.

In a previous article, we saw how John Newton gives us some deeply convicting ways to examine our hearts. Christians, he says, put too little time and effort into examining themselves and seeking to grow in holiness, in the fruit of the Spirit. But does such close examination mean that we are doomed to always feel inadequate,

ashamed, and guilty? No, because Newton sees a deeper knowledge of sin leading to a richer rejoicing in grace. No one was better than Newton at urging people to 'use the gospel of grace' on the heart in order to change it. Here are two things I've learned from Newton over the years on how to do this.

People often try to fill their hearts with the *danger* of what they are doing. You can tell yourself "if I keep doing this it will cause problems for me." That may be true and could be good 'smelling salts' to get you to recognize your problem. But if that is all you say to your heart, it (as it were) bends the metal of your heart but doesn't really soften and permanently reshape it. The motivation is ultimately selfish and it only brings short-term change.

We need to go deeper to the

only lasting way to change our hearts—take them to the radical, costly grace of God in Christ on the cross. You show your heart the infinite depths to which he went so that you would be free from sin and its condemnation. This fills you with a sense not just of the danger or sin, but also of its *grievousness*. Think about how ungrateful it is, think of how your sin is not just against God's law but also against his heart. Melt your heart with the knowledge of what he's done for you. Tremble before the knowledge of what he is worth—he is worthy of all glory.

A second powerful thought from Newton is this: we sin not simply out of a rebellious desire to be our own masters, but also because we are looking to things

*(Continued on page 4)*

## YOUNG SUPPORTERS GIVE GENEROUSLY AT HOPE FOR NEW YORK'S SPRING BENEFIT

More than 500 people attended Hope for New York's Young Supporters Spring Benefit in May, giving nearly \$37,000 to support Hope for New York's work to serve the poor and marginalized in our city.

The May 9 event was our seventh annual Spring Benefit, and the evening was a fantastic time of live music, food and drink, and

a special program mc'd by Aaron Bjerke, Redeemer East Side Community Group director.

The purpose of the Spring Benefit is to engage young professionals in supporting the work of Hope for New York by giving financially and by volunteering with our affiliate organizations. An all-volunteer committee, the Young Supporters Committee,

helps plan and execute the Benefit each year.

Interested in contributing toward our Spring Benefit goal of \$50,000? We're accepting donations toward the goal through Friday, June 7, and **an anonymous donor has pledged to match all gifts during this time 1:1 up to \$50,000!** Give or find more info at [www.hfnyc.org/spring-benefit](http://www.hfnyc.org/spring-benefit).

# BEYOND ABUSE

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Committed to Freedom's *Beyond Abuse Retreat* for men and women took place at the beginning of May in Staten Island. A very diverse group arrived with the deep wounds that result from abuse, exploitation, and sexual trauma. In just three short days, they discovered spiritual tools to help them find personal empowerment and strategic hope.

"Never in my entire life have I had anyone make the love of God so clear to me," wrote one participant. Another wrote, "I was deeply moved and given a glimpse [of]

the light I knew was always there, [I] just couldn't reach the window or open the right one, not sure what metaphor works here...the generic off-the-shelf therapy I was getting was not helping. You're on the right side of the wave."

Like the *Beyond Abuse Seminar* offered annually by Redeemer's Diaconate and Counseling Center, the retreat provides proven abuse recovery resources, but does so in a more extended and experiential way that gives survivors an opportunity to integrate them into their personal journeys.

Does the retreat really make a long-term difference? Absolutely. "It's been ten years since I attended the *Beyond Abuse Retreat* and it changed my life. The tools I learned continue to keep me healthy," a retreat alumnus recently wrote.

Committed to Freedom will return to Redeemer next year for another *Beyond Abuse Seminar*. Further abuse recovery resources can be found at [www.committedtofreedom.org](http://www.committedtofreedom.org).

## VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL JULY 15-19

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BY AMY ROEBKE

VBS is a highly anticipated, week-long, gospel-centered event where our Redeemer children and friends from pre-school to 5th grade learn about God, hear the gospel, and are challenged to live out the gospel in their lives. The children start and end the day in a large group assembly singing songs, memorizing scripture, learning about missions and having fun. They are also divided into smaller groups and move through different stations that are focused on the daily Bible story, craft, music, and recreation classes. Though VBS has many great components to it, I personally have two favorites.

First, it brings joy to my heart to watch our children build com-

munity with each other and experiencing genuine fellowship through the common bond of Christ. During this week, our children are excited to see their friends and make new friendships as they spend the day learning God's word with each other.

Second, the children build relationships inter-generationally. The mark of a vibrant church is people actively caring for each other. Last year, we had over 100 volunteers, comprised of parents, small groups, and high school students serving before and during the week of VBS. Because of their love for Christ and for our children, they sacrificed their time to help decorate the building, teach the Bible stories, lead wor-

ship, assemble crafts, paint stage sets, participated in wacky skits and be Crew Leaders. Throughout the years we have seen relationships formed across generations strengthen our children's relationship with the Lord.

The goal of this event is for our children to fall in love with Jesus, build relationships with others, and be challenged to live out the gospel in their homes and neighborhoods. We invite you to pray for our children and the people investing in their lives for the sake of the gospel.

The event is July 15-19, from 9:30AM to 12:30PM. For more information email [amy.roebke@redeemer.com](mailto:amy.roebke@redeemer.com) or visit [www.redeemer.com/families/children/vbs.html](http://www.redeemer.com/families/children/vbs.html).

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### REDEEMER REPORT

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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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# VISIONS OF A CITY YET TO BE: PUBLIC ART AS CULTURAL RENEWAL

## A PROFILE OF ARTIST REBECCA LOCKE

England-born and New York City-based artist Rebecca Locke is thankful to come from a place that has inspired her work—a faded seaside resort for which she has great affection. And yet, it is not a place one readily admits one is from. Its name, “Bognor,” is a byword for “nowhere-ness”; in common English usage it suggests “a place that one would rather not be”—the opposite of aspirational.

Examples from the local culture itself highlight this further, including “Bognor or Bust”—a Saturday night game show that awards losers a vacation in Bognor Regis—and “Bognor Today, Tomorrow Bermuda”—the current advertising campaign for the UK’s National Lottery. English singer Morrissey’s song “Every Day Is Like Sunday” perfectly captures this sentiment: “a coastal town... they forgot to close down.”

But it wasn’t always like this. In the 1920’s Bognor had a Cannes-like draw and it is the faint mysteries of its gilded past that captivates this artist’s heart.

Rebecca has resided mainly in New York City since 1996, leaving only temporarily to receive her Masters in Fine Arts at Goldsmiths, University of London. After years away, the return to Bognor was a culture shock indeed, but her rich memories inspired her to see the town with the curiosity of a visitor. She would photograph the quirkiness and beauty she saw, and something of the place itself began to infuse her practice.

Her recent series *Brooklyn // Bognor* attempts to express this culture shock, contrasting the artist’s experience of New York City with her roots by the English sea-

side. The images are centered on Locke’s self-portraiture in which she wears her Brooklyn clothes out of context, walking through Bognor. They depict the charm and beauty of the English seaside, but hint at the uncanny—is there something of New York echoed in Bognor? A move to the city traditionally allows for the creation of a new narrative—a new self. In reverse, this work—a series of twelve staged photographs—asked if it was possible to create a new narrative of place. The artist’s work attempts to do this—Bognor is redefined and becomes regarded as an attractive and exotic place, a go-to place in England, defying the existing myths.

While on the surface, Bognor Regis serves as the common thread tying together much of Rebecca’s art, it is the theme of redemption that echoes beneath her work. Indeed the thread of redemption continues to weave through her recent public art project, the *William Blake Imagination Photo Booth*, inspired by the epic poetry of William Blake. Blake spent three years living outside of London in...you guessed it, Bognor Regis, in a seaside flint cottage at Felpham that still stands. This stretch of coast is regarded as the inspiration for much of his work, including epic poems *Milton a Poem* and *Jerusalem*, and is the place where he himself had his infamous visions. It is Blake’s regard for the imagination and the unseen that Rebecca references through the long exposure and light paint-

ing techniques employed in this recent series. Echoing the tradition of the seaside photo booth, Locke invited participants to “draw with light,” creating scenes from their own imagination, using the night sky and sea as a backdrop. (This portrait series will be on exhibit in Bognor Regis in June 2013.)

It is wholly fitting to remind



*The Steyne*, 2008 from the series *Brooklyn // Bognor* by Rebecca Locke

people of Blake, his visions and hope for redemption, as he imagined a new Jerusalem, the holy city of God, coming down.

*And did those feet in ancient time,  
Walk upon England’s mountains  
green:  
And was the holy Lamb of God,  
On England’s pleasant pastures  
seen!*

The famous words set to Sir Hubert Parry’s music have been used as the English anthem at sporting events, but it is not actually a poem of national pride. It is a vision of building God’s Kingdom here on earth, a vision of what could be.

*Highly involved in the Redeemer community whenever present in NYC, Rebecca works in the communications department and helped to develop many of Redeemer’s early designs.*



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## CHANGE AND GRACE... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

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besides God to satisfy and fulfill us. While Newton was good at pointing out the danger of having too low or light a view of one's sin, he was also good at pointing out the opposite problem—too light a grasp of what Jesus has done for us. Newton wrote to a man who was discouraged:

You say, you find it hard to believe it [is] compatible with the divine purity to embrace or employ such a monster as yourself. [In thinking this, you] express not only a low opinion of yourself, which is right, but too low an opinion of the person, work, and promises of the Redeemer; which is certainly wrong....

Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. He sometimes offers to teach us humility; but though I wish to be humble, I desire not to

learn in this school. His premises perhaps are true, that we are vile, wretched creatures—but he then draws abominable conclusions from them; and would teach us, that, therefore, we ought to question either the power, or the willingness, or the faithfulness of Christ. Indeed, though our complaints are good, so far as they spring from a dislike of sin; yet, when we come to examine them closely, there is often so much self-will, self-righteousness, unbelief, pride, and impatience mingled with them, that they are little better than the worst evils we can complain of....

You have not, you cannot have, anything in the sight of God, but what you derive from the righteousness and atonement of Jesus. If you could keep him more constantly in view, you would be

more comfortable. He would be more honored.... Let us pray that we may be enabled to follow the apostle's, or rather the Lord's command by him, Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice. We have little to rejoice in ourselves, but we have right and reason to rejoice in him.

(“Letter XI, to the Rev Mr S”, *Works of John Newton*, Vol. 6, 1985, pp. 185-187.)

If we are going to grow in grace, we must stay aware of being both sinners and loved children in Christ. We need a high and due sense of our sin before God *and* a deep and profound sense of our union with and acceptance in Christ.

In the end, it's the joy and wonder of the gospel that will change you permanently.