

SEPTEMBER 2015

THE BIBLE IS ALIVE AND ACTIVE

BY TIIM KELLER

“Today, as never before, the character of the Bible is publicly attacked as cruel and oppressive and those who uphold the historic view of its truthfulness are seen in the same light.”

Western society used to be basically divided between people who (1) respected the Bible as ‘the truth’ but didn’t follow it, (2) believed and followed it devotedly, or (3) rejected it as simply a book of legends and myths. Things are changing.

To begin with, the first group is rapidly declining in size. And the relationship between the second and third group has become charged in a new way. In the past, if you believed in the full authority of the Bible, your skeptical neighbors would have disagreed and explained why they couldn’t accept the Bible, and maybe even laughed at you in private. But they would not have felt the need to examine your ways of understanding and regarding the Bible and loudly ridicule them and try to shame you for them.

Today, as never before, the *character* of the Bible is publicly attacked as cruel and oppressive and those who uphold the historic view of its truthfulness are seen in the same light. There’s enormous social pressure on Christians today to abandon the historic understanding of the inspiration and authority of the Scripture and the role it should play in our lives.

This is why in September we will conduct a short, three-week sermon series on the Christian doctrine of the Word of God. On September 13, 20, and 27 we will consider the reliability, authority, sufficiency, and finality of the Bible. Both believers and skeptics are unfamiliar with what the Church has historically believed about the Scripture and what the Bible says about itself. Coming to grips with this is always crucial, but, in our time it is more important than ever.

We must not, however, be so intent on getting our doctrine

of Scripture right that we neglect its proper role in our lives. At Redeemer we have no desire to swell the ranks of people who believe in the truth of the Bible in principle but do not know its power in our lives. Jesus told the elites of his day that they “understand neither the Scriptures

nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29). Hebrews 4:12 says that the Bible is “alive and active, sharper than any two-edged sword.” How is it alive and powerful? There are many ways, but here are two.

The Word of God is the primary way we come to understand the truth about God. The second of the Ten Commandments forbids the making
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INSIDE: • DIACONATE’S DIVORCE CARE GROUP • ONE IN THREE REDEEMER ATTENDEES KNOW FEWER THAN FIVE PEOPLE
• EXPLORE YOUR CALLING IN A VOCATIONAL INSTENSIVE • JOIN TEAM HFNY FOR CHARITY BIKE RIDE
• MAKE A DIFFERENCE AS A MENTOR FOR HOPE FOR NEW YORK • THE BIBLE IS ALIVE AND ACTIVE (CONT’D)

O LORD, THE LIFTER OF MY HEAD — EXPERIENCE OF DIACONATE'S DIVORCE CARE GROUP

BY THE REDEEMER DIACONATE

I came to the group soon after my husband moved out when I felt my life was falling apart ...

It's hard to imagine the impact of a devastating break-up of one's marriage — the shock, the pain, the shame and condemnation, just to name a few. In 2013 the Diaconate saw a need to provide a care group that shows God's grace to women who are separated or newly-divorced. The experience of the four groups so far is that women seem to embark on a fresh start by diving into Scripture together and encouraging and building up one another's heart response to the Word with mediation and prayer. Through the work of the Holy Spirit and reminders of God's character, beautiful testimonies of God's goodness emerged from some of these women's journeys:

In my hour of total darkness, it was nice to know that others were going through a similar pain. Reading the Bible and praying together was the beginning of my journey to seek God. It gave me strength through that very hard first winter. — C. W.

It's a difficult group to join, not the party to which you were hoping to get an invitation, being only open to those with big serious marital problems. In the group you face the truth of your own life, your own failures and experience of pain. Sharing sad realities, we were God's agents of love to one another and we asked hard questions and figured out something about ourselves. — K. W.

I experienced God's grace on so many levels as we journeyed together and experienced His provision in very dark times. When someone got stalled, we remembered God's patience and perfect timing. I never expected to face a divorce but am humbled by God's providing these women. We gained a foundation not just to survive a devastating situation but to grow in Christ. — K. E.

In the beginning, I couldn't tell people about my divorce without crying. After the group ended, I could talk about it without crying. It was comforting to know that God extends grace in these circumstances of abandonment and infidelity. — A. L.

Through our tears and struggles we addressed issues of anger and forgiveness. In Psalms we recognized God's faithfulness and over the weeks we grew, healed, progressed and became stronger in our new reality. After the group the friendships have continued and we still meet to encourage each other. — M.D.

In Psalm 3:3 we read, "But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head." What beautiful imagery we have in this verse that our Lord is the lifter of our heads. This group epitomizes this verse that we can indeed count on God to lift up our heads when we feel ashamed, condemned, or beaten down.

Please pray for these women as they courageously face their brokenness and invite God to do his great work in the midst of extreme pain. And please reach out to ellie.ellsworth@redeemer.com or 917-206-1359 if you would like to explore participating in this bi-weekly group that is scheduled to start on evening of Thursday, September 10.

REDEEMER REPORT

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Kathy Keller
Heather Klein

Hunter College Auditorium
E. 69th St.
(between Park & Lexington)
Services: 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m.

W83rd Ministry Center
150 W. 83rd St.
(between Columbus & Amsterdam)
Services: 9:30/11:30 a.m., 5 & 7 p.m.

Salvation Army Auditorium
120 W. 14th St.
(between 6th & 7th Aves.)
Services: 9:30 a.m. & 5 p.m.

ONE IN THREE REDEEMER ATTENDEES KNOW FEWER THAN FIVE PEOPLE

BY MAX ANDERSON

When I was looking at the results of our congregational survey this spring, this statistic is what stood out to me the most. It means that if you are sitting in a Sunday worship service either the person on your left or the person on your right doesn't know more than a handful of people. Or maybe that person is you. It's no secret that it's hard for new people to get to know others in a big church like Redeemer, even if they'd like to. This is really important for a number of reasons.

First, there is a correlation between how many friends you have in church and how happy you are. Sociologists Robert Putnam and Chaeyoon Lim did a study in 2006 and found that people with at least 10 friends in their congregation were almost twice as happy as those who have none.

Second, there is a strong correlation between having friends at church and "being a good neighbor." Putnam found that people's propensity to be generous and serve is connected more to their community at church than it is to their other Christian practices or theology. Describing people with strong communities at church, he writes, "They're more likely to work on community projects. They're more likely to give to secular causes as well as religious causes. They're much more likely to volunteer for secular causes as well as

religious causes. They're more likely to give blood. They're more likely to let a stranger cut in front of them in line."

Third, the Biblical account of grace describes people being saved into a community, not as isolated individuals. The church is described as a family of sons and daughters with God as our Father (1 John 3:1). Paul describes the church as a body, and each of us is a part of the body with Christ as the head (Colossians 1:18). Peter describes Christians as building blocks intended to be used together to form a temple for God "... you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood ..." (1 Peter 2:5)

So what should we do? I have a couple recommendations. If you are one of the two-thirds of people who have many friends at Redeemer, I urge you to think about how you can serve your neighbors and welcome them into community. I have three practical suggestions:

1. Show up early.

A lot of us show up to church just in time for the service to start or, maybe just in time for the sermon. We're trying to maximize *our* time and not waste time sitting around waiting for service to begin. But doing that leaves you little margin to meet and greet the people sitting next to you. What if you invested

15 minutes of time every Sunday in getting there early and sought to welcome and get to know one other person you don't know?

2. Stay late.

In addition to getting there early, you could stay late and go to the coffee hour. Maybe you already do, but do you spend all your time catching up with people who are already your friends? What if you went to the coffee hour with the specific intention of meeting one person and welcoming them? If we all did that, this place would feel vibrant!

3. Start a Beta Group.

About half our congregation is in community groups. We think this is the best way to be in community at Redeemer. The question is always: are there enough open community groups for people to join? Would you consider investing 8 weeks in leading one?

And if you are part of the 1/3 of people who don't know many people at Redeemer, my advice is to not be shy.

Sign up for a beta group. These are groups of 8-12 who meet each week, discuss the sermon and pray together. They have been the best part of my experience at Redeemer and have given me lifelong friends.

Hang out at coffee hour and introduce yourself to someone. The greeters and people at the

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EXPLORE YOUR CALLING IN A VOCATIONAL INTENSIVE

It reached out and grabbed me and convinced me I had to change my life. — Katie Sullivan, Legal Intensive

Are you looking for ways to explore your calling this year? This fall, consider deepening your faith and work integration with a 3-Month Vocational Intensive. Intensives follow similar contours to the Gotham curriculum framework, exploring how the gospel is at work transforming our hearts, communities, and the world, and are led by Gotham Alumni. Over the course of nine weekly 2-hour meetings and three Saturday sessions, participants learn in community how to apply theological content and biblical truths to everyday work life, creating a

more meaningful and sustainable integration of faith and work.

Participation in a fall intensive includes attendance at the 2015 CFW Conference. This year's conference is *Beyond Collaboration: Discovering the Communal Nature of Calling*. This two-day event will explore themes of covenant and calling, investigating how the gospel makes a whole greater than the sum of its parts. The intensive also incorporates daily devotionals, weekly theological readings and a prayer partner relationship into the curriculum.

This fall's lineup includes Cross-Vocational, Law, Healthcare, Built Environment (architects, developers, planners, real estate sales, construction),

BY CENTER FOR FAITH & WORK and Arts, with more to be announced.

Before this program, I never stopped to ask myself how I could integrate my faith into the workplace. In hindsight, my church, work, and social life were not intertwined, but instead, were kept separate from one another. For some time, I was selfishly preoccupied with finding the perfect job. Essentially, I was looking for work itself to fulfill me. I wanted work to serve me rather than I serve it. Never did I ask myself how I could serve and bring God's kingdom into the workplace until I began this 3-month Vocational Intensive. — Gena Lee, Cross-Vocational Intensive

Check faithandwork.com/intensives for updates.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO JOIN THE HFNY CHARITY BIKE RIDE ON SEPTEMBER 26

There's still room on Team HFNY for Redeemerites who want to cycle and fundraise for Hope for New York as part of the Charity Bike Ride on September 26.

Riders of all levels are welcome to join Team HFNY, and can choose one of four routes to cycle: 25, 50, 65, or 100 miles.

Our training rides are up and running, and, so far, over 30 riders have joined us to train, ride, and fundraise toward our \$125,000 goal!

This is a great opportunity for anyone who wants to meet other riders and join our community of people raising funds for mercy and justice across our city!

Learn more at hfny.org/bikeride, and sign up this week to enjoy all the team activities!

MAKE A DIFFERENCE AS A MENTOR WITH HOPE FOR NEW YORK

Probably more than any other volunteer opportunity with Hope for New York, mentoring a young person one-on-one can give you the opportunity to experience transformation and growth firsthand.

This month, Hope for New York is recruiting 100 new volunteers to serve as mentors with its affiliate organizations that serve children and youth.

Mentoring with Hope for New York can involve anything from participating in activi-

ties and afterschool programming to serving as a one-on-one mentor and friend. When you join any of our programs, you'll also meet an incredible community of mentors who encourage and pray for one another throughout the year.

We're hosting two events this month for you to discover what program might be the best fit for you.

At our **Mentor Match-Up Social** (Thursday, September 10), you'll join us for a fun,

back-to-school-themed night at the W 79th St. Boat Basin and have a chance to be "matched" to a mentoring program.

At our **Mentor Info Session** (Tuesday, September 15), we'll share the ins-and-outs of each program, answer any questions you might have about mentoring, and share next steps for getting connected to a program.

Learn more about these events at hfny.org/mentoring. See you this school year!

THE BIBLE IS ALIVE AND ACTIVE ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

of images — pictorial representations of the Triune God — for use in worship. Why, we might ask? If pictures and statues of God help you in prayer, why would the commandments forbid them? For centuries, the Protestant church (and especially the Presbyterian and Reformed churches) have argued that it is through the reading and teaching of the Word of God that the Holy Spirit is given free reign to illumine the mind and heart with the truth. Images hijack that truth, and present a pre-digested version of God's character.

The *New York Times* recently ran an article "Turn the Page, Spur the Brain" that presented empirical findings showing that reading to children, even infants, was crucial for brain development. They found that expos-

ing children to a video or a picture short-circuited the child's imagination. One expert said: "They're not having to imagine the story [for themselves]; it's just being fed to them." Another pointed out that children who were exposed to reading "showed significantly more activity in the areas of the brain that process visual association, even though the child was listening to a story and could not see any pictures." In short, verbal communication makes your mind and heart do the work of grasping and imagining the story for yourself. Images tend to feed you what some other person's imagination has created.

I am not denigrating visual arts in general. But this simple article about reading to children supports an ancient Prot-

estant understanding about the power of the Word to capture our hearts with the truth in a way nothing else can. 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:6 says, remarkably, that right now by faith we can "behold the glory" of Christ. And this beholding is linked to the Spirit's work in our hearts as the Word of God is read and heard (2 Corinthians 3:12-16).

For years I thought that God could be active in my life through the Spirit and that the Bible was a book I had to obey if God was going to come in. I now realize that Bible *is* the way that, through the Spirit, God is active in my life.

The preachers at Redeemer this month will be leading the congregation to consider this topic, so culturally and personally critical to us all.



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SUPPORT REDEEMER CTC WORLDWIDE TRAINING

Many of you look forward to City to City Sunday each fall! This year CTC Sunday happens on September 27. All three congregations will meet pastors who will start new churches in global cities in partnership with CTC. You'll have the opportunity to support these new churches and others by contributing to the Special Offering. Last year Redeemer stepped up in a big way and generously funded CTC's mission with over \$100k in gifts.

This year Redeemer hopes to fund even more. On CTC Sunday you will meet church

planters from Amsterdam, Cape Town, Dublin, San Francisco, Edinburgh, Hamburg, Helsinki, Johannesburg, Krakow, Lagos, Pretoria, and Vienna. They're here in New York City for a month-long training residency called the International Church Planting Intensive.

Not only does CTC host many programs in New York, CTC also hosts in-depth trainings in global cities on five continents all year-round. The remaining cost to deliver global training is \$417K, and your generosity can make it all happen.

Please be praying about how

you might give. Also, get familiar with CTC's worldwide work, any of the training programs, and find out how you can hang out with some of the Intensive participants before they return home in October.

You can already give at [redeemercitycity/rpc](https://redeemercitycity.com/rpc) and you can follow us on Twitter (@RedeemerCTC), Facebook (facebook.com/RedeemerCTC) and Instagram (instagram.com/redeemerctc). We're posting regularly and hope to see you online!

For more information, get in touch with Nicole at nicole@redeemercitycity.com.

ONE OF THREE ATTENDEES ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 3)

information table are especially good and can help introduce you to other people.

Whether you are new to Redeemer or an old-timer, you

can always take the initiative. The ball can always be in your court. But I recognize it's a lot easier for old-timers to reach out than for a newcomer to

reach out. So this message is for the members and long-time attenders: let's lay out the welcome mat and make some friends.