

OCTOBER 2017

## IDENTITY IN CHRIST

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BY TIM KELLER

There is no more characteristic theme of modern western culture than that of ‘identity.’ Talk is incessant about gender identity, racial identity, national identity, self-esteem and personal identity. The Bible, however, speaks about Christians getting a new ‘name’ in Christ, the more ancient way of talking about a change in identity.

In ancient times, a person’s identity and self-worth largely rested in one’s family. So if you had a lot of children it meant you were esteemed and respected in society. But God says that believers receive a name “better

than that of sons and daughters” for it is “an everlasting name that will not be cut off.” (Isaiah 56:5). In other words, the Lord gives us an identity not based ultimately in family or race, in money or success — *it is not like any other kind of identity in the world. And the New Testament tells us it comes to us through faith in Christ.* In Christ we are born again and adopted into God’s family (John 1:12-13) and we have God’s name put on us (Revelation 3:12), and so receive the praise and applause of God (Romans 2:29). This being “in Christ” means now that no other feature — not

your education, vocation, gender, race, or any other human condition or achievement — defines you or grounds your worth and identity as does your relationship with God through Christ (Galatians 3:26-28). It also creates a deep bond and tie to all other believers, regardless of their worldly status, gender, race, or nationality.

This year’s “Formation” emphasis in the Redeemer churches includes three conferences that **bring our family of churches and ministries together**, and this coming November 17-18, at the

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## CITY LAB —

## FAITH & WORK: FROM VISION TO IMPLEMENTATION

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Many congregants struggle to connect worship on Sunday with workplace realities on Monday. This ministry year the Center for Faith & Work, in partnership with Redeemer City to City (CTC), will provide faith and work training for this year’s City Lab Series, *Faith*

*and Work: From Vision to Implementation.*

This five-part series will equip pastors and key leaders from their congregations with the framework and tools necessary to create a faith and work movement that weaves together robust theology and spiritual

formation in community. Each session will include teaching from Tim Keller, Chairman and Co-Founder of Redeemer City to City, and David H. Kim, Executive Director of the Center for Faith & Work. Practical guidelines for developing

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# FORMATION: A NEW COMMUNITY

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BY BIJAN MIRTOLOOI

In September the Redeemer churches began a year-long sermon series and ministry theme on “Formation: in Christ, with community, for the city.” Right now we are focusing on the second part of that statement: how participation in a Christian community is one of the necessary ingredients of true and lasting Christian formation.

According to the New Testament, community is an essential, not optional, part of the Christian life. The Apostle Peter writes, “You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5). The image is evocative: Peter suggests that Christians depend on one another the way stones in a building do. A pile of stones merely gathered together in one place is, well, just that: a pile of stones. But that pile of stones can be transformed into a beautiful building if — and only if — those stones are fitted together in close relationship, where every stone is both supporting and being supported. If Christians are to grow and flourish they are expected to be in interdependent rela-

tionships in which they depend on other Christians, and other Christians depend on them.

The idea of Christian interdependence can be difficult for some of us to stomach. We modern people prize optionality, self-sufficiency, and individualism. David Brooks describes our culture as the culture of “the Big Me,” in which everyone (more or less) thinks that they are really awesome and that the world does in fact revolve around them. With this mindset, self-reliance is a virtue and expression of a need for others is seen as weakness. Brooks writes:

*We live in a more individualistic society. If you humbly believe that you are not individually strong enough to defeat your own weaknesses, then you know that you must be dependent on redemptive assistance from the outside. But if you proudly believe the truest answers can be found in the real you, the voice inside, then you are less likely to become engaged with others. Sure enough, there has been a steady decline in intimacy.*

— David Brooks, *The Road to Character* (New York: Random House, 2015, p. 257).

While there are certainly things to celebrate regarding modern progress toward individual freedoms, the reality is that total self-sufficiency is an idol that will crush all of its worshippers. There is simply too much in life that is too hard to be borne alone — and deep down, we know this to be true. That’s why the church and the invitation to Christian community are gifts from God. He knows that we are weak, and so in his kindness has said that we need not go alone.

Sustaining an interdependent community is not easy. What’s more — too many people have been hurt, ignored or forgotten even as they tried to connect more deeply to other Christians. So if this kind of community will exist in our churches, it will only happen through grace. Peter went on to write, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone” (1 Peter 2:7). Christians are invited into this new community because Jesus was rejected. Christians are built together into something surprisingly beautiful only in and  
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## REDEEMER REPORT

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.

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# REDEEMER CITY TO CITY INTERNATIONAL INTENSIVE

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On October 4, 17 church planters from around the world will arrive in New York City for two and a half weeks of training designed to hone their skills for planting and sustaining churches in global cities. This annual training, hosted by Redeemer City to City (CTC) and called the International Intensive, leads to the planting of new churches and is made possible each year thanks to generous gifts from donors like you.

Here is the story of one church planter you helped support from the 2015 International Intensive and details on how you can meet the incoming class of church planters for 2017.

*Imagine a city more than twice as crowded as New York City. Lagos, Nigeria is the most populous city in Africa, and every year 250,000 more people move there. It's a cultural hub that sets the direction for Nigeria. In turn, Nigeria sets the direction for Africa.*

*The spiritual climate is a thriving nominalism with a health and wealth gospel message. But promises delivered by this prosperity gospel haven't delivered, and people are becoming disillusioned and leaving the church.*

*Femi Osunnuyi grew up in Lagos. He moved to the UK in 2007 where he lived for seven years and earned a Ph.D. in engineering. While in Manchester, England, Femi heard the teaching that God loves cities, and it really captivated his heart. He and*

*some friends started praying for a gospel-centered movement to ignite in the churches in Lagos. He knew about CTC, so when Al Barth was speaking in Manchester, Femi attended the event.*

*He recalls, "I had the Rocky theme song playing in the back of my head as I rehearsed stats about Lagos, preparing to accuse Al and CTC of ignoring Africa's largest city. But as soon as he knew where I was from, Al quoted several statistics about Lagos that I didn't even know." CTC had identified Lagos as a target city and was searching for the right person to plant a church there.*

*After experiencing true gospel renewal in their own lives while in the UK, Femi and his wife, Tosin, wanted to share this with others. In 2015, they moved back to Lagos and launched City Church Lagos in January 2017.*

*City Church Lagos is growing and already needs a bigger meeting place. Femi and others are actively looking, but money is a challenge. Lagos is the seventh most expensive city in the world. This is a struggle, and they would so appreciate your prayers.*

*Another obstacle is the pace of life. The average workday in Lagos is long. It's not unusual for people to leave their homes at 5:30 a.m. and not get home until 10 p.m. Burnout is a huge issue.*

*Because the prosperity gospel is so prevalent, Femi, Tosin and others at the church have studied it extensively. Femi says, "We think the questions the prosperity*

*gospel is asking are legitimate. We don't engage in a condescending way. People understandably want a better life. There is a plausible logic to their thinking. We think their conclusions are wrong, but we understand how they got there. We are trying to paint a better picture. We try to come in the back and slowly teach what the Bible really says." Their approach seems to be effective, as about 50% of their congregants were formerly part of churches that held to health and wealth teaching.*

*The church's three values are: Love Jesus. Love people. Love Lagos. Femi says the first two are considerably easy to talk about. The third is the hard sell. He points to the gospel as the example. "God loved us while we were unlovely, and so we too are called to love cities that are not always lovely. We shouldn't love the city to use it — to fulfill our dreams — to get what we can get out of it." He says that a lot of love starts with intentionality before it moves to the heart. He sees hatred of the city slowly shifting to neutrality, and he's encouraged.*

*City Church Lagos has 3 small groups, and the community is growing and strengthening. Femi says, "There's a lot of personal renewal and community building going on, and we are looking into the mission aspect now."*

*Thank you, Femi and Tosin, for answering the call to return to and love Lagos with the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

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# THE NEXT TEN YEARS WITH HOPE FOR NEW YORK

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BY ELISE CHONG

**A**t Hope for New York, our vision is a city in which all New Yorkers — every individual, family, and community — are thriving and flourishing socially, economically, emotionally, in every way.

We envision a city where all of our neighbors have homes to live in and jobs to support their families. All of our children are provided with the opportunities they need to reach their full potential. And every exploited, vulnerable, isolated, or marginalized person experiences justice.

That is why we came up with our 10 year vision to see a movement of mercy and justice expand across our city. In the next 10 years, we plan to incubate new non-profits to

holistically serve our city, activate New York churches to love their neighbors in need, and unite New Yorkers to provide solutions to poverty.

To do this, we want to grow to 30 partner churches and 90 non-profit affiliates.

This past fiscal year, we kicked off our 10 year vision by adding three new church partners: **Hope Church Midtown**, **Redeemer Lincoln Square**, and **Renaissance Church**, as well as five new non-profit affiliates: **Dream Center NYC**, **Expect Hope**, **Prison Fellowship**, **Thrive Collective**, and **Urban Hope NYC**. This expands our network to 10 partner churches and 50 affiliates.

Ultimately, we want to see

Christians living out their call to generously and sacrificially serve their neighbors in both word and deed, demonstrating Christ's love in practical acts of compassion.

Imagine a New York City where churches are known for doing justice and loving mercy. A city where the Church is serving even more New Yorkers in need — from East Harlem to Far Rockaway, Jamaica to West Brighton, the Lower East Side to the South Bronx.

That is what we are believing God will do in our city, through His people, and for our neighbors in need.

We are excited at how God will use each of us as agents of mercy and justice in our neighborhoods.

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## CITY LAB ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

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programming and spiritual formation practices will also be part of each teaching.

Each of the sessions will be available for Livestream for those who would like to participate remotely. Remote participation can be accessed by visiting [faithandwork.com/citylab](http://faithandwork.com/citylab).

**Dates:**

September 14, 2017

November 9, 2017

February 8, 2018

March 22, 2018

May 17, 2018

**Topics:**

Why Faith & Work?

Understanding our redemptive historical context

Towards a theology of faith and work

The critical importance of the imagination

The need for spiritual discernment

Sessions are held on Thursdays from 2 to 5 p.m.

Please join CTC and CFW for this unique opportunity to explore how the church can disciple others to see how their faith and work intersect.

## IDENTITY IN CHRIST ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

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**Salvation Army auditorium on 14th Street**, I will lead participants through an exploration of this crucial theme and subject. There will be three sessions.

The first will be entitled “Modern Identities” and it will explore the views of identity that prevail in the world’s cultures. We will examine how they differ from the biblical and Christian teaching. We will give special treatment to the way identity is understood and formed in the late modern western culture in which

we live.

The second session will be “Gospel Identity,” and there we will discuss what the Bible tells us a gospel identity is and how it operates in our lives. We will give some time and attention to how a gospel identity can make us peacemakers and bridge builders in a diverse and fragmenting society.

Finally, the third session will be “How a Gospel Identity Grows.” It would be great if we all instantly lived fully out of our identity in Christ, but we do not, because growth

into Christlikeness is a process that is gradual and always unfinished in this life. How then can we develop a gospel identity? We will look at how we do so through the five practices of Christian formation (devotion, worship, accountability, hospitality, and rest).

I couldn’t be more excited about this subject and the retreat. I hope to see you there.

For more information, see [redeemer.com/formation](http://redeemer.com/formation) **conference**.

## FORMATION: A NEW COMMUNITY ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 2)

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through Jesus Christ, the cornerstone.

What’s your next step towards greater community involvement at Redeemer? For some it’s getting consistent with showing up to worship every Sunday. For others it’s committing to a Community Group.

Or maybe it’s time to consider joining the church as a formal member. Whatever your next step is, take it. God has invited us to get going, and you need not go alone.

In his poem “Choruses from the Rock,” T. S. Eliot wrote,

*What life have you, if you have not life together?*

*There is not life that is not in community,*

*And no community not lived in praise of God.*

To learn more about Formation, visit [redeemer.com/formation](http://redeemer.com/formation)

## CTC INTERNATIONAL INTENSIVE ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 3)

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Participants in this year’s International Intensive Class are from: Adelaide, Beirut, Cape Town, Durban, Edinburgh, Johannesburg, Kampala, Kiev, Londrina, Monterrey, Nairobi, Prague, Rio de Janeiro, Rome and Sao Paulo.

You will meet these church planters at CTC Sunday on October 8 (Downtown and

Westside) and October 15 (Eastside and Lincoln Square) and you can support the global work of CTC through the special offering.

In addition, on October 16 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the CTC office, CTC is hosting an Open House where you can meet and encourage these church planters. See details in the Connect

insert in your Sunday bulletin. Space is limited. RSVP by Sunday, October 15. If you need any additional information, please email [susan@redeemercitytocity.com](mailto:susan@redeemercitytocity.com).

*The article on Lagos was taken from an article that appeared in the CTC Quarterly Snapshot.*



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## “FORMED BY THE GOSPEL” — SAVE THE DATE!

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Join Tim Keller and the Redeemer community for an exploration of how a Christian identity can be understood, embodied, and galvanized to serve those around us at the **Formation Conference: Formed by the Gospel** on November 17-18.

Register at [redeemer.com/formationconference](http://redeemer.com/formationconference)