

SEPTEMBER 2019

PREPARING TO “GO AND TELL”

BY TIM KELLER

In most western nations the culture has become more secular over the last few decades. People are not only unconvinced of religion but also uninterested. In most of the U.S. there is no longer any social pressure to go to church; in fact, if anything, there can be a social cost. In this situation how should Christians understand their call to be witnesses for Jesus (Acts 1:8)?

We can no longer just say to others *come and see*, but we need to move more and more to *go and tell*. Let me unpack that a bit.

“Come and see” means bringing friends and neighbors to events or to church to hear presentations of the gospel. This remains crucial of course, but in our society we may find fewer people are willing or even ready to profit from such occasions. As happened in the early church (see Michael Green’s *Evangelism and the Early Church*) today the great preponderance of witness must happen informally, naturally, relationally.

As those early disciples found, those who don’t yet believe become interested through conversations in which we identify ourselves as follow-

ers of Jesus and engage their questions about faith in general and Christianity in particular.

How do we prepare for this? The most basic requirement for personal faith sharing and witness is *not* any kind of formal training. The primary need is for the kind of courage, vulnerability, humility, love, and patience that come from a heart grown spiritually mature in Christ through the Word, prayer, and involvement in church and worship.

John Stott wrote that a “living contact with God” is the basic foundation for witness. **“Nothing shuts the mouth, seals the lips and ties the tongue like the secret poverty of our spiritual experience.”** In other words, if you love people enough and desire them to have the unique, infinitely rich life you have in Christ, then witness simply happens.

The second requirement, however, is your own study. The more good books you read on faith, the more confidence you will have to receive the kind of questions and complaints people have about our faith. There are too many good, basic volumes to list here, so let me just give you a sampling —

all published just this year — that have prepared me better for “go and tell.”

A new great book is Rebecca McLaughlin’s *Confronting Christianity* (Crossway, 2019). It lists “12 Hard Questions,” all of which you will get (eventually) if you are in conversations about faith. One chapter is a good overview of the topic is “Hasn’t Science Disproved Christianity?”

If you’ve read that and want to go deeper I suggest Christian Smith, *Atheist Overreach: What Atheism Can’t Deliver* (Oxford University Press, 2019). Smith says that his book is *not* trying to make the case that atheism is wrong. Rather, he argues convincingly that if there is no God then there can be no basis for human rights or moral values of any kind, and that while many claim that science can give us a basis for those things, it cannot. Science can tell us what we can do and also how to do it efficiently — but it can never tell us whether we *should* do it or not.

Smith’s book is short and a pretty quick read. If you want a more detailed explanation of how science has failed to
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REDEEMER EAST HARLEM LAUNCHES IN OCTOBER!

BY JUSTIN ADOUR, PASTOR, REDEEMER EAST HARLEM

Exactly one year ago this month, Redeemer East Side announced plans to establish a new congregation — Redeemer East Harlem (REH). This was an idea, a hope, a dream, a vision that my wife and I had felt growing in our hearts for nearly a decade. And although last year’s announcement was the culmination of years of praying and dreaming, it also brought questions: the chief one being “How does one plant a church well?”

East Harlem, though a beautiful and vibrant community, is a complicated neighborhood — often rightfully weary of change and leery of newness. We asked ourselves, and others asked us, “Who is this church for?”, “How do we honor the work churches and ministries have already been doing for generations here?”, “How do we join what God is already doing here?”, “How does our presence in the neighborhood become *good news* for the *whole* neighborhood?”, and “Who is going to be interested in embracing those kinds of questions with us?”

Over this past year, God has been faithful in bringing together a group of people committed to considering those questions. This group ranges from those born and raised in the neighborhood to new residents and everything in between. They are a group committed to embracing and engaging both the beauty and the brokenness of the neighborhood.

Additionally, God was faithful by going before us to establish life-giving, neighborhood-focused partnerships with other churches, community-based organizations, and non-profits also seeking the peace and prosperity of East Harlem. For the past year, even without church services, we have absolutely felt like a church on mission, in the neighborhood, seeking to both know and show the love of Christ in East Harlem.

Now, one year later, REH is honored and excited to announce our next chapter — officially launching public worship services. In his faithfulness, God provided us a

partnership with a local small business where we will hold worship services beginning October 13.

We are deeply grateful for those who have supported this effort, prayed for us, and for those committed to the vision of being a “church *in* and *for* East Harlem that we might both *know* and *show* the love of Christ.” Please pray for REH as there is much to do in preparation for our official launch. Join us in praising God for his great faithfulness, knowing he will continue to be faithful for years to come!

As a church centered on seeking the peace and prosperity of East Harlem, we hope everyone considers the scope of this vision and attends only to the extent they are willing to do the hard work of helping create a church for the good of East Harlem.

For more information about REH and to keep up with how God is working in and through us go to reh.nyc or follow us on instagram, [#RedeemerEastHarlem](https://www.instagram.com/RedeemerEastHarlem).

REDEEMER REPORT

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Redeemer East Side
Temple Israel Sanctuary
112 E75th St.
(btw Park & Lexington)
Services: 9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m.
& 5 p.m.

Redeemer West Side
W83rd Ministry Center
150 W. 83rd St.
(btw Columbus & Amsterdam)
Services: 9:30 a.m.,
11:30 a.m. & 5 p.m.

Redeemer Lincoln Square
New York Society for
Ethical Culture
2 W. 64th St.
(at Central Park West)
Service: 10:30 a.m.

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

THIS FALL, COMMIT TO COMMUNITY

BY BIJAN MIRTOLOOI

John 17 has rightly been described as the holy of holies in the Bible. Only there can you find an extended conversation between members of the Godhead, as Jesus, the Son — on the night before his death — prays to God, the Father.

Throughout John 17 one of the main themes Jesus comes back to over and over in his prayer is the community he longs for his followers to experience. First, Jesus describes the *kind* of community his followers can experience: true unity amidst real and important differences.

The unity of God's people is patterned after the unity of the Father and the Son (17:21). The Christian doctrine of the Trinity shapes the practice of Christian community. Though the Father, Son, and Spirit are equally God, the Father is not the Son, nor is the Son the Father. Thus, the Trinity reveals oneness even when there is not sameness, as well as distinction without division. The unity that Christ envisions for his people is a unity that depends on difference.

Jesus also says something about *why* this kind of community matters: "I in them and you in me — so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (17:23).

When people who are deeply different come together and form community because of the

shared fact that they have been loved by Jesus Christ, the community that is formed is a living and breathing manifestation of the gospel. The gospel — the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ — brings reconciliation. But the reconciliation that the gospel brings is not only about bringing people back into relationship with God; it's also a reconciliation that enables people who otherwise would have nothing to do with each other to become part of the same spiritual family, and to do life together in relationships of interdependent difference.

This kind of community — real difference and yet real unity — is both rare and refreshing. Emmanuel Katongole, professor of theology at Notre Dame, writes about the possibility of Christian community:

*"We are called to be strange in the same way that the early Christian communities were strange to the world around them. The [Christian] community in Antioch brought together Jews and Samaritans, Greeks and Romans, slaves and free, men and women in a way that was so confusing that people around them didn't know what to call them. So they called them 'Christians.' The only way they knew how describe their peculiar actions was to say that they were followers of an odd preacher from Galilee." **The world is longing for such new and odd communities in our time.***

Finally, Jesus prays about *what makes this community possible*: "For them I sanctify myself"

(17:19). To sanctify something is to set it apart for a specific work or use. Here Jesus says that he has set himself apart to do the work that he was sent into the world to do, namely, bringing God's salvation by dying as a sacrifice for sin. Through Jesus' death the reconciling power of God is made known. Thus, it's not too much to say that Jesus' death made it possible for you to form and participate in community, coming together with people across all kinds of difference for the purpose of loving and serving each other, and the world.

How then can you apply all this grand theology of John 17? One way is to commit, or recommit, to community inside the church. If you're already plugged into a Community Group, then reengage with your group this fall with the passion of Jesus' prayers for your community as seen in John 17. If you're not yet in community, maybe new to Redeemer or the city, consider signing up for one of our newly forming Beta Groups (redeemer.com/beta). Beta Groups are short, seven-week groups that give you a chance, with others that are also new, to experience the power of community.

As Christine Pohl has said, the quality of our life together is a testimony to the truth of the gospel. Experience the power of Jesus and the wonder of the gospel afresh as you commit to community this fall.

HOPE FOR NEW YORK YEAR END REPORT

BY KATHERINE WOODELL, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS, HFNY

Each summer we take time to look back and celebrate all that has happened this past fiscal year (that is, July 1, 2018–June 30, 2019) — and we are so thankful for what God has done this past fiscal year!

We invested more than \$2.32 million of funding into our non-profit affiliates. That's our highest grant distribution yet and a 7% increase from last year! It includes \$1,989,000 in direct grants, \$100,000 in capacity building grants, \$187,643 in volunteer impact grants, and \$50,000 in seed funding for new initiatives!

On the volunteer side, 4,753 volunteers gave nearly 35,000 hours to serve our neighbors in need. We believe volunteers are invaluable resources to our affiliates, often playing the crucial role of filling in the

gaps within non-profits, enabling these organizations to do work they might not have the capacity to do otherwise. We celebrate them!

We're also celebrating our three newest church partners: Christ Church NYC, Emmanuel Anglican Church, and Wellspring Church NYC. Our hope is that our church partners would serve as amazing resources for our affiliates in the communities they serve. Ultimately, our hope is to see mutual transformation take place as people from our churches enter into relationships with people in their communities by serving at our affiliates.

In partnership with Redeemer, we launched the Neighborhood Advocate Cohort (NAC) as a learning community to equip lay people

with a gospel-driven vision for the flourishing of communities and neighborhoods. Twenty-eight lay leaders from across the congregations met to worship, reflect, and learn about building mutual relationships, serving justly, and sharing the hope of Christ with their neighbors.

We are so grateful to our supporters, our volunteers, our partners, and our friends who made this possible. We'll be sharing more stories in the coming months — and also more about the new affiliates we're partnering with in the fall — but for now, thank you for celebrating with us!

Hope for New York's mission is to mobilize volunteer and financial resources to organizations serving the poor and marginalized in New York City.

MEETING THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF THE CITY WITH COUNSELING GROUPS AND WORKSHOPS

BY ANITA NK SUNG, COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR, RCS

This fall, we at Redeemer Counseling Services (RCS) will continue to realize our vision to renew the city by providing both client care and training opportunities. For clients, RCS will be starting its fall counseling groups (**counseling.redeemer.com/groups**). These groups are on topics that address struggles that people face, such as anxiety, emotion-

al eating, boundaries in relationships, how to live a life of sexual integrity and healing from the heartbreak of infidelity. These counseling groups are led by seasoned counselors who facilitate the groups from a gospel-centered counseling approach. Our approach, which brings the gospel into each group topic, is an experience that is rare to find in oth-

er counseling groups and is a unique opportunity to receive both professional counseling and a safe place to process the relevance of Christ in what members are experiencing.

We are also excited to share that Redeemer Counseling has grown in its training opportunities for both pastoral ministry leaders and other counseling

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“GO AND TELL” ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

provide us any basis for moral ideals, see James Davison Hunter and Paul Nedelisky, *Science and the Good: The Tragic Quest for the Foundations of Morality* (Yale University Press, 2019). These authors — one a sociologist and one a philosopher — trace out all the attempts to use science and secular reason (rather than religion) to discover how human beings ought to live. The authors show how in each case those appealing to science for a definition of the good and just human life always smuggle in assumptions about reality

and human nature that are essentially religious beliefs.

To drill down on just one of those failed attempts, see Anne Harrington, *The Mind-Fixers: Psychiatry's Troubled Search for the Biology of Mental Illness*, (W. W. Norton, 2019). Harrington is a professor of the history of science at Harvard, and she shows how, since the late 1970s, there has been an effort to see virtually all mental illness, including depression and anxiety, as biologically based — as strictly a scientific problem, a problem with the physical brain, that

can be fixed with proper medication. While the author is a not supporter for religion *per se*, she makes a strong case in one field that supports the larger point being made by Smith, Hunter, and Nedelisky.

In no way am I saying you must digest these particular books in order to “go and tell.” The books are illustrative. But they are the kinds of things to read in order to be in a position to have good and extended conversations with modern, secular people about their questions concerning faith.

COUNSELING GROUPS AND WORKSHOPS ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 4)

professionals. In October, RCS will be offering its first continuing education workshop (**counseling.redeemer.com/trainingworkshops**) for counseling professionals on the topic of integrating a Christian spiritual framework to therapy. After full participation in the workshop, counseling professionals licensed in New York can receive continuing educa-

tion units (CEUs) from New York State.

In November we will offer another workshop for ministry leaders on the topic of anxiety. As we grow in our training initiatives, it has been a blessing for us to share our gospel-centered approach to counseling to bring renewal and support in both the counseling and church communities.

We have so much more to share about the work that Redeemer Counseling is doing in the city and our vision to expand our ministry beyond what we can imagine! To keep informed about the ways we are growing and to receive some counseling tips, sign up for our Redeemer Counseling Update at **counseling.redeemer.com/update**.



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Editor's Note: This quote comes with a trail of footnotes that may be longer than the quote itself! However, it's worth it. Originally, Thomas Cranmer wrote it during the war between England and Scotland in 1548. More than 470 years later it applies just as aptly to the hostility between countries, ethnic groups, political parties, and those of different race, gender, and other deep divides. The abridgement was made by Alan Jacobs and was taken from a letter written by Lewis to his brother Warnie, dated September 18, 1939, (a mere 80 years ago!)

Most merciful God, the Granter of all peace and quietness, the Giver of all good gifts, the Defender of all nations, who hast willed all men to be accounted as our neighbours, and commanded us to love them as ourself, and not to hate our enemies, but rather to wish them, yea and also to do them good if we can: ... Give to all us desire of peace, unity, and quietness, and a speedy wearisomeness of all war, hostility, and enmity to all of them that be our enemies; that we and they may, in one heart and charitable agreement, praise thy most holy name, and reform our lives to thy godly commandments.

¹ Found in *The Remains of Thomas Cranmer, collected and arranged by Rev. Henry Jenkyns (4 vols. 1933), vol. II, p. 186.*

² Referred to by C. S. Lewis in a letter dated September 18, 1939, taken from *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis: Books, Broadcasts, and the War 1931-1949, Volume II*; ed. Walter Hooper; Harper Collins, San Francisco, 2004; p. 278.

³ Quoted by Alan Jacobs, *The Year of Our Lord 1943: Christian Humanism in an Age of Crisis*; Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 11.