

## *Introduction and Format*

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A Gospel-centered church is rare. Many churches begin with the core mission of connecting people to Jesus, but over time they drift into maintaining themselves or following a separate agenda. They do it all in the name of Christianity, but the heart of their message has gone. Something else beside the grace of Jesus Christ takes center stage.

Similarly, churches can either exist for themselves, focused on the needs of the members. Or, they can answer God's challenge to pour themselves into the city where they belong, bringing gospel healing to broken hearts, broken neighborhoods, broken societies.

These two main themes—a church centered on the Gospel and a church for others—capture the essence of Redeemer Presbyterian Church. How can we keep this essence and avoid the all-to-common drift toward institutionalism? How do we continually repent as a church and renew our core convictions?

The goal of these twenty-five studies is to expose a large portion of our congregation to the core values of our church in a new way. Many of us have seen articles or heard discussions about these eight values. But never before have we sat down, as a whole, in Scripture and prayer. Maybe they've seemed distant, something that a committee came up with. Now is the opportunity to become personally convinced by God about the nature of our church and to become personally challenged to find your part in His plan.

Dig into the core values that drive Redeemer's ministry. See how God captures your group's heart and helps each of you grow in your love for him and desire to serve his kingdom. Our community in Christ is our family, and our family is to grow into the likeness of our Father. Most of all, renew your group's heart and change your group's life, by soaking in the gospel hope which motivates us to live for his glory and to care for others.

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This guide provides twenty-five lessons, each exploring God's call to his church to become bold visionaries of his kingdom. They are meant to give each of us at Redeemer a similar hope for our church and for its ministry.

**Read.** First, have someone in the group slowly read the passage listed. The passages are relatively short, so take time to consider each phrase. If you do not understand something, you might refer to your Bible's study notes and look at the surrounding text. Spend a brief time discussing the passage before moving on to the application. Ask the group if everyone understood what the passage meant.

**Apply.** Next, ponder the brief interpretation in light of the passage. What is the biblical writer trying to say? What is the main point? Using the thought-provoking questions, seek the Holy Spirit's guidance regarding your own response to the passage. These are not quick fill-in-the-blank questions; they are intended to cause you to slow down and meditate on the truth God is teaching you. How does the biblical teaching apply to your life as a part of this community of faith? Where do you need to grow or change? How has Christ already changed you? Because these questions are more free-form, they will help people interact with heart issues. Caution: they may also encourage the more talkative people to dominate or more easily sidetrack the discussion onto tangents.

**Pray.** Pray for a genuinely transformed life, that lives as Christ lived. Also, take this time to pray for our particular church. You might use this time to pray for other issues as well. Praise Christ for his goodness.

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Each core value is spread out over three or four lessons. This format allows the group leader to spend as much time discussing each topic as necessary. If your group needs to, you can compress the study into fewer sessions by grouping the related lessons together.

<u>Core Value</u>	<u>Lessons</u>
1. <i>Gospel</i> . The gospel changes everything.....	1-3
2. <i>City</i> . The gospel changes our attitude toward the city .....	4-7
3. <i>Outward Face</i> . The gospel makes us a people for others .....	8-10
4. <i>Gospel Community</i> . The gospel creates a new community .....	11-13
5. <i>Changed Lives</i> . The gospel produces transformed lives .....	14-16
6. <i>Social Healing</i> . The gospel heals social brokenness .....	17-18
7. <i>Cultural Renewal</i> . The gospel renews culture.....	19-20
8. <i>Movement Mindset</i> . The gospel continually breaks out.....	21-23
<i>Summary: A Church for the City and for Christ</i> .....	24-25

**THE GOSPEL CHANGES EVERYTHING**

*2 Corinthians 5:21 — God made him who had no sin to be sin for us,  
so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

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*Read*

2 Corinthians 5:17-19

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*Apply*

This verse is one of the best summaries of the Gospel. It shows how God placed our sins upon Jesus (“be sin for us”) and gave his perfect obedience to all who trust in Him (“we might become the righteousness”). Salvation is a declared status, it is an act of God’s mercy which cannot be earned.

This simple truth is the foundational Truth that explains everything. It takes a moment to grasp and an eternity to fully understand. It is the essence of Christianity. As followers of Christ and as a church we must carefully guard this truth—never allowing it to be pushed aside, forgotten, diluted, or hidden. All our joy, all our hope rests in this: that Christ Jesus died for his people so that they would have new life in Him.

1.      Ask yourself, “Have I based my life on this truth?”
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2.      If so, have you “forgotten” it in any way, or buried it behind other things which have become too important to you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3.      How can Redeemer as a church stay committed to the centrality of the Gospel?

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*Pray*

For renewed hearts through knowing Christ, or knowing him better.

**THE GOSPEL CHANGES EVERYTHING**

*Galatians 2:16 — A man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.*

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*Read*

Romans 8:12-17

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*Apply*

Our sinfulness is so complete (Rom 3:23) that even our striving for God's favor is tainted with selfish motives, powerless to achieve anything (Phil 3:7ff). So, the best and the worst of us both need to lay down our effort of earning God's favor and instead receive his mercy in Christ Jesus. Salvation is not a project of self-renovation ("becoming good enough for God") but rather a complete rebirth.

Even our ability to place our trust in Jesus is a gift from God. Therefore, since Christians possess a new status they know that they are simultaneously perfect (by decree) and yet still a sinner (by practice). This knowledge is what makes the gospel so liberating. You can admit your terrible weakness and need of grace, but also possess a confidence in God's love.

1. Praise God for His complete gift of salvation in Christ.
  
2. How is your gospel freedom? Are you confident before God?
  
3. Are you growing in your freedom to admit sin and weakness, knowing that you are forgiven in Christ?

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*Pray*

For gratitude that you are God's child.

## Three – In Line With the Gospel

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### THE GOSPEL CHANGES EVERYTHING

*Galatians 3:3 — After beginning with the Spirit,  
are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?*

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*Read*

Galatians 3:1-3

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*Apply*

Christians will always drift back toward a legalistic view of salvation. It starts subtly: our spiritual fervor, or devotion, or ministry involvement, or consistency, or new-found obedience really are signs of our Christian vitality. Before long, however, we begin to think of them more and more as the cause of our vitality.

Being right with God slowly drifts from grace alone to grace plus achieving this standard. At this point, Paul tells us we have created a false gospel, a gospel of law rather than grace. The same grace that began our relationship with Jesus is what keeps us in that relationship. “Lay your deadly doings down, down at Jesus’ feet/ Rest in Him, and Him alone, gloriously complete.”

1. What else do you tend to ‘add’ to grace to feel accepted and loved by God? Consistency, zeal, obedience to certain morality, ministry? How are these barriers to your relationship with Him?
2. When you have a ‘bad day,’ do you blame yourself or God? Why? What about a ‘good day’—do you give yourself credit for it?
3. Renew your hope in the grace of Jesus by repenting of using your good deeds as a means gaining his favor.

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*Pray*

For eyes of faith to remember the Gospel daily.

## *Four — The Refuge of the City*

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### **THE GOSPEL CHANGES OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CITY**

*Numbers 35:15 — These six towns will be a place of refuge for Israelites, aliens and any other people living among them.*

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*Read*

Genesis 4:10-17

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*Apply*

The first city, and all cities, are designed by God to provide safety and refuge for people. The weak, (or the new, the deviant, the oppressed, the hurt, the outcast), all can be better cared for in cities. Cities are places where resources of healing are strongest.

In a fallen world, however, this good design is twisted by mankind. Cities, which attract the weak, can at times weaken them further. Cities can promote unhealthy deviations in culture. Cities can enflame class tensions when the ‘insiders’ resent the drain on resources that the ‘outcasts’ cause.

The gospel alone makes us humble enough to respect the weak and the diverse. Now that the barrier between God and his people has been mended by Christ, then Christians can mend and heal the barriers that cities promote. Christians can love the diversity of the city beyond human expectations.

1. How do you view the city? What emotions come to your mind?
2. Are you concerned about the needy, or do you see them as a burden?
3. How does your view of the city line up with God’s view? Do you see both the goodness and the fallen nature of the city?

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*Pray*

For God’s refuge made known in New York City.

## Five — The Culture of the City

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### THE GOSPEL CHANGES OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CITY

*Jeremiah 29:7 Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.*

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*Read*

Jeremiah 29:4-7

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*Apply*

Cities are cultural laboratories. What is discovered, uncovered, and invented in the city spreads out to the rest of culture. Cities attract the best of many fields, who spur one another on toward excellence and achievement. This creativity and invention is design to honor God as we care for his creation.

The fallen nature of people, however, drive them toward self-glorification, workaholism, and competition. Culture itself becomes an idol instead of a means to worship God.

Christians, renewed by their approval in Christ, have a confidence to excel in this cultural enterprise. At the same time, they can do it with humility, thankfulness to God, and genuine encouragement to others. We want our home city (and then by influence our entire society) to become beautiful so that God would be honored.

1. What attracted you to live and work in the New York area? Were you challenged by your career?
2. What are some ways that New York is the cultural center of America? Why would that be a good place to transform with the gospel?
3. What does it mean to be a Christian ‘good neighbor,’ to be genuinely interested in the welfare of the city?

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*Pray*

For God’s peace and prosperity in New York City.

**THE GOSPEL CHANGES OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CITY**

*Hebrews 12:22-23 — But you have come to Mount Zion,  
to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.  
You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly,  
to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.*

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*Read*

Hebrews 22:18-24

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*Apply*

The center of every city is a temple. Ancient cities put their god's temple on the high place, the heart of the city. At the physical and spiritual center of Jerusalem lies Mt. Zion, the Temple of Yahweh. In the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem is the throne of the Lamb.

What we worship gets the biggest and best building, even today. The old church steeple, once the pre-eminent feature of the New York skyline, is lost in the shadows of commercial skyscrapers. This change reflects not so much architectural or demographic shifts as it does a theological shift. We live in a city that worship commerce above all else.

Christians long to see the worship of Christ at the heart of everyday life, so that on subways, in elevators, at the water cooler, at playgrounds, the 'buzz' of interaction is God's word.

1. What are some of the main 'temples' in the city? What do New Yorkers worship?
2. How does the Gospel answer the longings that people seek elsewhere for?
3. What obvious differences would take place if worshipping Christ was the main activity of the city?

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*Pray*

For love for New York City and its inhabitants.



## *Seven — The Promise of the City*

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### **THE GOSPEL CHANGES OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CITY**

*Proverbs 11:11 — Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted.*

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*Read*

Hebrews 11:8-10, 13:14

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*Apply*

Cities are large, overwhelming, even frightening to many people. What can we do to really change an urban area the size of New York? As Christians care for the world around them in the name of Christ, we can be confident that the gospel will transform the city. Everywhere that Jesus reigns, everywhere that his kingdom spreads, will be healed by the presence of the King.

When the ‘upright’ (the people of the King) bless the city with their lives, then that city becomes more like the true city in heaven, more like the city of our eternal home. We are to make our home here as a stranger looking ahead to our “city that is to come.” Wherever we plant the light of grace, the darkness passes.

1. Is New York overwhelming to you? In what ways? Why?
2. What excites you most about living here?
3. What can you bring, as a Christian, into your neighborhood, (or your profession, or your interest networks), that is uniquely helpful?

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*Pray*

For Redeemer’s desire to serve the city.

**THE GOSPEL MAKES US A PEOPLE FOR OTHERS**

*1 Corinthians 1:27— But God chose  
the foolish things of the world to shame the wise;  
God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.*

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*Read*

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

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*Apply*

As we reach out to others with the hope that is within us, we do it with great respect and honor (1 Peter 3:15-16). Why? Because we know that we are no better than anyone else. Our calling and relationship with Jesus came from nothing in our own merit. He drew us to himself while we were still blind fools.

We can affirm the value, wisdom, goodness, and insight of anyone, even those who fundamentally disagree with us. At the same time, we can point to something better, something more true: the cross.

We need to remind ourselves of the continued foolishness of the cross. It makes sense only to people whom God has enabled to see it. Our arguments will never convince anyone by themselves. We glory in our inability, knowing that God's power is made perfect in weakness.

1. What is the difference between winning an argument versus witnessing?
2. Think of a somewhat annoying co-worker. List three things about their character that are better than you; thank God for those attributes.
3. List four people that you know who don't believe in Jesus. Pray for opportunities to build your relationship and witness about the hope inside you.

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*Pray*

For humility and respect toward your neighbors.

## Nine – Gospel Hope and Courage

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### THE GOSPEL MAKES US A PEOPLE FOR OTHERS

*Romans 1:16 — I am not ashamed of the gospel,  
because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.*

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*Read*

Romans 1:16-24

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*Apply*

Everyone who comes to Christ is a miracle. Just as no one is ‘good enough’ to avoid the need of God’s grace, no one is ‘bad enough’ to be outside the reach of God’s grace. Jesus ate with the outcasts: the wayward and lost, the scoundrel and sinner, the bitter and broken.

This makes us bold and direct because we don’t rely on the approval of others. If people challenge the gospel, we can stand firm in our hope. We don’t have to take challenges personally.

This also makes us hopeful and persistent because we don’t write off people as impossible. God speaks to people through countless means. Our words may bring in the harvest, or they may just plant a seed, or till the soil, or water. We can pray, hope, and wait for years.

1. What intimidates you about telling other people about Jesus?
2. Are some people more intimidating to you than others? Why?
3. Is there anyone that you’ve given up hope about? Repent of that lack of trust and recommit that person to the Lord in prayer.

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*Pray*

For courage to live the Gospel before others.

**THE GOSPEL MAKES US A PEOPLE FOR OTHERS**

*2 Corinthians 5:14— For Christ's love compels us,  
because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.*

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*Read*

1 Corinthians 5:14-15, 19b-20

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*Apply*

Christian evangelism is seen by many as proselytizing or ‘winning converts,’ a competition between the major religions of the world.

Reaching others with the Gospel is not a contest, it is an expression of love. We speak to people with the words of Life. A Christian must tell others about Jesus just like an inventor must share a cure for a deadly disease.

The means of evangelism, therefore, are important. Manipulation or emotional appeals might seem ‘effective’ looking at the number of responses. But such methods deny the truth of the gospel and the compassion of the gospel.

1. What motivates you to tell people about Jesus? Guilt? Aggressiveness? Love?
2. What seems phony to you when people try to sell you something? Do you inadvertently employ the same methods in telling people about Jesus?
3. How is your zeal for telling people about Jesus? Is it strong? Weak? Has it grown? Shrunk?

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*Pray*

For Christ’s love to ignite your heart to love others.

**THE GOSPEL CREATES A NEW COMMUNITY**

*1 Peter 2:10 — Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

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*Read*

1 Peter 2:9-10

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*Apply*

The church is a beautiful creation of God. A bunch of rebels, nothing in the world's eyes, fallen and bruised, become God's new family on earth. God sees us as we will be forever, without the stain of sin. Since we are united to Christ, we derive a grandeur fit for kings.

In fact, Christians become prophets, priests, and kings. As they speak the words of hope, they are prophets. As they care for a hurting world in prayer and mercy, they are priests. As they shape the world around them for the great King, they are kings.

Christians step out of what defined them in the world—culture, class, vocation, family—and into an entirely new status. They become a new *ethnos*, a new people.

1. What is the unifying bond of all Christians?
2. What makes a good, strong, healthy family? How can Redeemer become that kind of family of faith?
3. Building solid relationships takes time and work. Are you willing, by God's grace, to pour yourself into other people's lives to build relationships?

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*Pray*

For a fresh understanding of God's mercy.

**THE GOSPEL CREATES A NEW COMMUNITY**

*Ephesians 4:32— Be kind and compassionate to one another,  
forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

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*Read*

Ephesians 4:29-5:2

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*Apply*

Our relationships within our new family can become the deepest and best relationships in our whole lives. We can, for the first time, think of others ahead of ourselves, because we are certain of God's approval. We stop using people, or competing, or envying, or 'needing' people, or hiding. Instead, we can give people whatever they need or deserve: truth, service, praise.

The central feature of our new relationships is forgiveness. It is a willingness to bear the cost of conflict, to seek reconciliation above winning. It recognizes that our so-called 'rights' were often justifications for living selfish lives. Christians are notably quick to forgive because they know that they are already forgiven.

1. Are you quick to forgive? If not, then why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. When you speak, do you use the opportunity to build other people up?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What word describes your friendships? How would you like them to be known as? What can you do to make them that way?

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*Pray*

For courage to forgive others.

## *Thirteen – A New Way of Belonging*

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### THE GOSPEL CREATES A NEW COMMUNITY

*1 Corinthians 12:27— Now you are the body of Christ,  
and each one of you is a part of it.*

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*Read*

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

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*Apply*

We live in an self-centered universe. When Christ brings us to himself, he takes us out of this narrow shell into a vast community. We are part of the “body of Christ;” we have a new purpose, a new people, a new family.

All of God’s people belong to this new community. We see the people that God has placed into our life as his gifts to us, his way of showing us the fullness of his grace.

We mature in Him only as we grow together in Him. Part of this maturity comes from putting aside our strictly individualistic way of looking at life and taking up a community mindset. As we read what God tells us, we learn to think in terms of “we” instead of “I.”

1. How individualistic are you? How much of this culture’s focus on ‘self’ is a part of you?
2. What hinders your involvement in the community life of Redeemer?
3. Think of people that God has placed in your life. Thank him for the blessings that they provide you (even the lessons that you learn from the more difficult ones).

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*Pray*

For unity among the churches in New York City.

**THE GOSPEL PRODUCES TRANSFORMED LIVES**

*1 John 3:1— How great is the love the Father has lavished on us,  
that we should be called children of God!  
And that is what we are!*

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*Read*

1John 3:1-3

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*Apply*

When we are adopted into God's family, our relationship with God is utterly changed. We go from an employee-boss relationship to a child-parent relationship. Our Father in heaven perfectly loves us.

This means that we have direct access to Him in our prayer. He hears our worship, our concerns, our joys and tears. A boldness enters into our hearts as we stand before God. He is great and mighty, but he is our God—our Father.

Everything in our life, whether good or bad, is used by Him to bring us closer. What he wants from us is a deep and permanent union. So our requests for that never go unanswered. He delights in our delight of Him.

1. How is God a perfect Father to you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. God sees you 'in Christ,' in other words as beloved as his Son. Does that knowledge change the way you live?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What boldness do you gain from knowing that God is totally for you?

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*Pray*

For a deep sense of our favor with God in Christ.



**THE GOSPEL PRODUCES TRANSFORMED LIVES**

*Romans 8:31 — What, then, shall we say in response to this?  
If God is for us, who can be against us?*

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*Read*

Romans 8:31-39

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*Apply*

What is our purpose in life? What sets our priorities? If our chief purpose is to know God and enjoy him forever, then what about things that hinder us from that? Our union with Christ is so strong that anything in this world, even death itself according to this passage, is unable to tear us away from Him.

This freedom and confidence dramatically affects our ability to relate to others. Instead of seeking approval from someone else's standard, we know that we are unshakably bound to Him. Jesus is the preserver; Jesus is the one who completes our salvation. Christians can have a humility and sensitivity that flows out of gratitude while at the same time a boldness before others. Whenever opposition to God's kingdom blocks us, we rest secure in knowing that God rules over all and is using everything for his glorious purposes.

1. What are you good at? What comes easily to you? Do you find your confidence in your performance?
2. Could anything really tear you away from Christ Jesus? How much do you have faith in his promises of preserving you in him?
3. What are some ways that our community can encourage each other with the hope that God is in control of all things for the sake of his people?

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*Pray*

For confidence in Christ, not yourself.

## *Sixteen — A New Approach to Problems*

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### THE GOSPEL PRODUCES TRANSFORMED LIVES

*Romans 8:18 — I consider that our present sufferings  
are not worth comparing  
with the glory that will be revealed in us.*

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*Read*

Romans 8:18-27

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*Apply*

We know that we deserve eternal punishment for our treason against God; we also know that in Christ we are set free from that end. Anything that now happens to us is a ‘deal.’

Suffering can produce a new gospel-driven response. Before, we could only be angry at God (for treating us so badly) or angry at ourselves (for bringing such terrible consequences on our head). Life consisted of avoiding suffering or complaining about it.

But now, we can see that our suffering is a participation with the suffering of Jesus. Instead of denying it or hiding from it, we use it as a school—the school of suffering—to show us more of Jesus. We become more like him when we suffer; we lose our attachment to this world; we become more heavenly-minded; we die to ourselves.

1. When you are in the midst of bad circumstances, how do you react?
2. Christians are realistic about suffering. Do you ever minimize or deny suffering in your life or in others?
3. Do you see a change in the way that you handle suffering?

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*Pray*

For a renewed heart of endurance and hope.

## Seventeen — Healing Racial Brokenness

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### THE GOSPEL HEALS SOCIAL BROKENNESS

*Acts 10:34-35 — Then Peter began to speak:  
“I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism  
but accepts men from every nation...”*

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*Read*

Acts 2:1-13

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*Apply*

Pentecost opened the way of salvation for all people. God’s favor now rests upon all nations, which become the New Israel in Christ. Yet the pride of prejudice is so strong that the early Christians were astounded with God’s openness.

Peter needed a vision to teach him that the Gospel of grace applies to everyone who believes, regardless of their heritage. Just as no person is acceptable to God based on their merit, no particular people-group is acceptable to God based on what that culture has to offer. Demanding a particular culture is a means of falsely adding to the Gospel.

Christian racial reconciliation is based on the unity of believers with Jesus Christ, rather than relativism. There is truth in God’s Word; there is a right and wrong way for people to live. All cultures contain good gifts from God’s image, mixed with the sins of fallen humanity.

1. What are the strengths of your particular cultural background? What would be, according to scripture, some of the weaknesses?
2. Are there people-groups that you find difficult to relate to? Confess that now and seek help from the Spirit to overcome those difficulties.
3. Since you are now part of one family united to Christ, are there people that you are able to relate to that you wouldn’t have been able to otherwise?

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*Pray*

For racial harmony in New York based on gospel unity.

**THE GOSPEL HEALS SOCIAL BROKENNESS**

*Amos 5:15 — Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts.*

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*Read*

Amos 5:7-15

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*Apply*

Lifting up Jesus Christ as the ruler of all nations points Christians to a wise view of social change. The overly-optimistic humanist use politics to bring ‘salvation,’ and the overly-pessimistic moralists ignore the needs of the poor because they ‘deserve it.’ A Christian, however, actively seeks to bring the transformation of Jesus to bear on the needs of society.

The real justice comes not by might or power, but by the Spirit. Social problems come from misunderstanding the gospel. So preaching the Gospel in both word and deed is the mightiest weapon against evil.

When the King goes forth, he heals the land. As Jesus enters into neighborhoods and areas of need, the gospel forces mercy, justice, and righteousness. The Kingdom confronts cruelty, oppression, injustice and always creates a shake-up of the status quo.

1. What are two of the main social problems in New York? How has a misunderstanding of the gospel led to (or continues) both?
2. Do you actively ‘hate evil?’ Do you promote justice?
3. Pray now for the chronic poor. Pray for them to find a way out of the trap of poverty and for Christians to become more involved in helping.

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*Pray*

For God’s mercy and justice through his living presence.

## *Nineteen – Our Work Matters to God*

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### THE GOSPEL RENEWS CULTURE

*Genesis 1:28 — God blessed them and said to them,  
“Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.”*

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*Read*

Genesis 1:27-31

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*Apply*

When God mandates his people to subdue the earth, he intends for us to be stewards over his creation, to offer up to him the fruits of our labors. He creates us to work, to fabricate out of the stuff of his creation. We, in his image, bring order out of chaos and beauty out of desolation.

All of our work is a service to him. Whether we are homemakers or astronauts, surgeons or artists, our work matters to God. This also means that the gospel will not only change individuals and neighborhoods, but the culture itself.

Our vocational calling is a means of expressing our love for Him. As we work, we offer it as worship. Our abilities, experiences, intelligence, all come from him and are used for His glory. We care for the world he made.

1. Christians today have a small impact on our culture. Why? Is that right?
2. Being a steward means using someone else's resources for their benefit. If we are stewards of God's world, are we using it for his benefit? Are we wasting resources or hoarding them for ourselves?
3. What are ways that your occupation serves people? Thank God for the opportunities that he's given you.

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*Pray*

For an understanding of your calling in life.

## Twenty – God Matters to Our Work

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### THE GOSPEL RENEWS CULTURE

*Colossians 3:23 — Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart,  
as working for the Lord, not for men.*

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*Read*

Colossians 3:23-24

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*Apply*

We must work for something—either the approval of others or the approval of God. The gospel frees us from seeing our worth as simply what we produce. Remarkably, this enables us to more freely produce, just without the striving and anxiety.

We gain a proper perspective on work. It becomes part of our overall life as a disciple. Even though it is important and should fill up six of our days (see the fourth commandment), it need not overtake our lives. We too easily view our work as a task to accomplish rather than a calling to fulfill.

As Christians in the workplace, we think about our jobs in light of Christ. What does it mean to be a Christian banker, or doctor, or parent, or reporter, or student? The ways that we do our daily business are impacted by our understanding of grace.

1. What does it mean, besides telling co-workers about Christ, to live out your faith at work?
2. When no one is looking, are your motives and methods different from others around you?
3. How would the Gospel shape the very structure of your vocation? What assumptions about 'how things are done' would be different?

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*Pray*

For a heart of worship in whatever you do.

## *Twenty One – A Movement of Power*

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### **THE GOSPEL CONTINUALLY BREAKS OUT**

*Matthew 11:12 — From the days of John the Baptist until now,  
the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing...*

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*Read*

Matthew 13:31-33

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*Apply*

The Gospel cannot stop spreading. Throughout history, the church has waxed and waned. It goes through cycles of purity and blemish, revival and retreat. But always God protects a remnant of his people for the sake of his name.

The joy in this for a Christian comes from knowing that God's plans are far more vast and glorious than can ever be imagined. When the days are the darkest, a ray of hope remains. The Christian life is an adventure, because God is always one step ahead of us. He is always working in people's hearts, even while we are asleep. How?

The gospel is a power of its own (Rom 1:16-17). His kingdom grows through his people, but also around them and despite them. Our hopes for a renewed city may seem impossible to us, but God is more than able to bring about whatever he desires.

1. What would it take for God to shake up the status quo, both with his own people and with the world around us?
2. What would a movement of God look like? How important is such a dramatic change to you? Do you long for it?
3. List whatever you think are the greatest challenges to the gospel in our society. How will God address them?

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*Pray*

For a new movement of God in New York City.

**THE GOSPEL CONTINUALLY BREAKS OUT**

*Hebrews 10:24 — And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*

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*Read*

Hebrews 10:24-25

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*Apply*

Every believer is part of God's movement in history. His big plan is accomplished person-to-person as the love of Christ flows from one heart to another. The Gospel spreads as natural and organic as a cup overflowing into a saucer. Our hearts, filled with grace, simply spill over.

Part of that overflow means that we all are called to serve one another; each of us is a minister of grace in the various forms of service that God has gifted us for. We exist to point one another to Christ and to encourage each other in our worship of Him.

1. What spiritual gifts of ministry do you believe God has given you? How faithful have you been in using those gifts?
  
2. Is our church marked by encouragement?
  
3. Do you see yourself as part of a grand plan of redemption?

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*Pray*

For perseverance in encouraging others (and yourself) toward love and good deeds.



## Twenty Three — A Movement of Churches

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### THE GOSPEL CONTINUALLY BREAKS OUT

*Colossians 1:18 — And he is the head of the body, the church;  
he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead,  
so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*

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*Read*

Colossians 1:15-23

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*Apply*

God's primary means of advancing his kingdom is through the church. His church is his family who have been brought into a new kingdom, into peace with God through his work on the cross.

Think of the metaphors of the church: the bride of Christ, His body, living stones, the temple of the Lord, and so on. In each of these metaphors is the notion of building, of growth. Jesus Christ is the sole head of his church. As we grow, we grow into him.

New churches have always been the way that God reaches new people. Why? Some reasons are: the sense of mission and concern is strongest; more Christians have freedom to lead; new networks for the Gospel open up; creative means of preaching the gospel are used. That's why Redeemer feels called by God to start new churches in our metropolitan region.

1. Think of some other reasons why starting new churches is a good way to reach new people.
2. How do we keep Jesus Christ supreme as the head of our church?
3. What avenues of service could be opened up to you as Redeemer expands?

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*Pray*

For the church to experience God's fullness.

## Twenty Four — A Church for the City

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### SUMMARY

*Proverbs 11:10 — When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices.*

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*Read*

Proverbs 11:11

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*Apply*

Every church must ask itself, “who do we serve?” Is our church for its members or for others? We believe, based on all that we looked at previously, that our church must exist to enable Christians to minister to others.

New York is not here to build up Redeemer. We are here, with God’s help, to serve the city. Our genuine concern as good neighbors reflects the honesty of our commitment to Christ. We need to live out what we claim.

This works itself out in daily decisions and major initiatives. Do we choose maintenance over advancement, tradition over creativity, inward focus over outreach? Do we seek out new ways of loving others and honoring our Lord?

1. How much change are you comfortable with? What about change that has an exceptionally good purpose?
2. Do unbelievers notice your lifestyle? Do they appreciate it, even if they don’t understand it?
3. What would make our church community stand out in the name of Jesus? How would we gain a reputation for good in a city as large as ours?

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*Pray*

For the city to rejoice in righteousness.

## CONCLUSION

*Exodus 33:15 — Then Moses said to him,  
“If your Presence does not go with us,  
do not send us up from here.”*

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*Read*

Exodus 33:12-23

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*Apply*

No matter what plans we make, no matter what activities we follow, if God does not go with us they are worthless. We should never seek to do anything as a church that does not lift up Jesus Christ.

That takes discipline. It is far too easy to fit into some program, some contemporary issue, some great idea, and then completely miss Jesus. We like activity and action. Or, we idolize the church more than what that church stands for.

We love Redeemer Presbyterian Church; we must love The Redeemer more. Whatever he wants, however he chooses to build, adapt, alter, even dismantle this institution, we should be eager to follow.

1. How can we be sure that our church’s direction is in line with what God wants? How can each of us fit into that purpose?
2. How might we protect the vision of our church so that 10, 20, or 100 years from now we will be as committed to it as we are now?
3. On this last day, look back at the previous questions. Is there any theme that stands out?

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*Pray*

For God’s presence to transform his people.