I'm thankful for your interest in learning "All About All Saints." This name for our membership class is a little ambitious as there's no way we can communicate everything about our church in just four meetings. But we'll do our best to tell you "a lot" about All Saints. (Maybe we should change the name!) Also, this class is not exclusively for those who have already decided that they want to become members of our church. It is also for those still deciding.

Joining a church is not a small or easy decision. It's the making of a covenant similar to the one made in marriage. Both marital and membership covenants are unions, established through vows, or promises, which are so encompassing that the covenant partners share one life. That is ultimately true for all baptized members of the universal Church (all Christians in all traditions and in all places), but it is also true, secondarily, of participants in every local church. Church members, by God's grace and through faith, share one life with each other, and that life is none other than the life of Christ Himself!

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Galatia: "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). That confession is true of all Christians, both individually and collectively, which means that not only the whole Church but also each and every local church can say: "We have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer we who live, but Christ lives in us. And the life we now live in the flesh we live by faith in the Son of God…" In fact, that is exactly what we do say each and every time we gather together for worship – that by grace through faith we live together in union with Jesus, and in Him we are bound to one another as well.

In one sense, joining a local church like All Saints is like joining a new family. In the church family, we receive spiritual nourishment, protection, counsel, care, direction, and accountability, in the hope that together we become people like Jesus and, as our mission statement says, *live as the Body of Christ in Austin and for the world.*

In the Bible, churches are like flocks and people like sheep, with Jesus being the ultimate Shepherd of the family of God (Ps 95:7). Under His authority, pastors and elders are ordained and responsible for everyone whom the Lord directs and calls into membership of their specific church. At All Saints, we see this responsibility to shepherd our portion of Christ's flock as a wonderful privilege. To that end, we want every member of our church to feel confident of God's leading and placement among us.

Our All About All Saints class, along with the rest of the membership process, is designed to help us get to know one another better and discern God's leading. Thank you for worshipping with us and for your interest in learning more about membership in our church. Nothing delights us more than seeing people added to our family.

In Christ,

Tim Frickenschmidt

MEMBERSHIP CHECKLIST

For those pursuing membership at All Saints, please look over the following outline of our membership process.

☐ *Attend All Saints for approximately 6 months prior to joining.*

☐ *Attend the "All About All Saints" class.*

☐ *Read the "All About All Saints" guide.*

☐ *Complete an interview with an elder or pastor.*

☐ *Complete and submit the Personal Information Sheets.*

☐ *Complete and submit the Membership Questionnaire.*

☐ *Publically take the 5 membership vows in worship.*

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MISSION, STRATEGY, AND VISION

by Rev. Tim Frickenschmidt

In order to understand who All Saints is as a church and what our calling is in Austin and the world, three terms must be defined – mission, strategy, and vision. Mission is what we strive by God's grace to be and do every day, as a community, as individuals, and as families - mission is oriented in the present. Strategies are the practical decisions and commitments by which our mission is accomplished; they are past-oriented because they are the means or avenues we have committed ourselves to in order to achieve our purpose in the present. Vision is future-oriented and imaginary; it is a picture, an imaginary description of what our purpose and strategies will eventually become. Vision is the long-term goal on the horizon towards which we are moving and working.

This paper is an apologetic of sorts, outlining and arguing for some basic concepts behind a renewed articulation of All Saints' mission as a church. Subsequent papers will outline the contours of a comprehensive church vision and the strategies necessary to take us there.

All organizations have a mission to accomplish or a purpose for existing; it may be implicit and unstated (as it has generally been at All Saints) or it may be clearly defined; but a common mission is at the center of any organization, the church included, in its daily life and work. So what is All Saints' mission? How do we conceive of and articulate what we are striving everyday to be and do?

I think the answer to this notoriously complicated and slippery question of mission has been embedded within the Eucharist portion of our worship liturgy, spoken and prayed weekly by us for years. The very last prayer we offer prior to the elements being served is: "Send us out to be the body of Christ in the world." That is the final and climactic prayer of not only one portion of our service, but of our service as a whole. It is also, I believe, our mission as a church – ***To Live as the Body of Christ in Austin for the World.***

God has redeemed His church in Christ and by the Spirit to live; this is our mission – to live a particular and unique life where God has planted us corporately and individually. "Life" is one of the great, foundational themes of Bible. "In the beginning God created…" (Gen 1:1) What did He create? Life. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." (John 1:1-4) Jesus was born, lived, died, rose, and ascended for more than just intellectual assent to His teachings, or for His followers to have satisfying relationships with one another, or for them to perform acts of mercy and justice. Jesus came to impart life – a life of faith, hope, and love in an intimate relationship with Him of such mysterious depth that the Apostle Paul describes it as analogous to the relationship between a person's head and the rest of his or her body. This means that to be a Christian and to be the Church is to share one life with God.

Consider one of Paul's summary statements about the Christian faith: "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." (Gal. 2:20) Elsewhere he also writes: "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ… God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Rom 5:1,5) The Church's primary mission is simple: to live out Jesus' life and love for God, others, and this world where and with whom we find ourselves. God redeems us, imparts the new life of His

of His Spirit to us, and places us in His world for the blessing and service of others and the glory and honor of God.

So, how do we do this? How do we live as Christ's Body in this world? What does it mean to live as people in union with Jesus and one another, as people sharing the same life? What does life *in* Christ and *for* Christ look like? Very briefly, we live as the Body of Christ on a trifold path: through worship, spiritual formation, and service. If our calling as the church is life, then these are the three means by which life is found, embraced, fostered, and employed.

Worship

First, in order to live as the body of Christ in Austin for the world, we gather together with one another to ***worship*** the Triune God each week. Our life in Christ as His people begins in corporate worship and is renewed during this time Sunday after Sunday, season after season, year after year. Worship is the most vital part of the Christian life – not the *only* part to be sure, but the most important part. In worship we listen to God's Word read and preached, we receive the Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, and we pray in response to that which we hear and receive through liturgy and song. We do this because these are God's means of administering His redeeming grace to us – Word, Sacraments, and prayer. Through these means, God gives new spiritual life to people, creating and renewing faith in the hearts of worshipping participants, and then He sends those same worshippers out into His world to serve others in their daily lives as His people. In order to be sent out to live in the world as Christ's church, we have to come together in worship as Christ's church – without the coming in, there is no going out; without the gathering together for worship, there can be no sending out for formation and service. Our life as Christians begins in corporate worship.

Spiritual Formation

Secondly, we live as the Body of Christ through ***spiritual formation.*** Again, the Apostle Paul: "Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slave you want to be once more… my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!" (Gal 4:8-10, 19). To have Christ "formed in us" means, at least, that our individual interior lives and characters, as well our relationships and common corporate character, are "conformed to the image of Jesus" (Rom 8:29). It means that from the inside out, from our hearts to our actions, and from our thoughts and emotions to our speech and behavior, we resemble Jesus, so much so that our lives smell like Him! Seriously? Yes! Paul also writes: "We are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing…" (2 Cor 2:15).

The question is "How?" How do we as followers of Jesus become conformed to Christ in our spiritual lives so much so that we embrace the same obedience to God the Father in which He lived while on earth? Dallas Willard attempts to answer this question in an essay entitled, "Spiritual Formation in Christ, A Perspective On What It Is and How It Might Be Done." He writes,

> "The spiritual side of the human being, Christian and non-Christian alike, develops into the reality which it becomes, for good or ill. Everyone receives spiritual formation, just as everyone gets an education. The only question is whether it is a good one or a bad one. We need to take a conscious, intentional hand in the developmental process… We have counted on preaching, teaching, and knowledge or information to form faith in the hearer, and have counted on faith to

> form the inner life and outward behavior of the Christian. But for whatever reason, this strategy has not turned out well. The result is that we have multitudes of professing Christians who well may be ready to die, but obviously are not ready to live, and can hardly get along with themselves, much less with others."

Does this sound familiar? Are Willard's words a description of your spiritual journey? Do they summarize your story? They do for many. So what are we to do? Doing, or better yet, *practicing* is a major part of the answer. Christian spiritual formation can be conceived of as the re-shaping of the inner life – the spiritual side of our humanity – by the Holy Spirit through God's means of administering His grace, especially the Word of God, the Sacraments of the Church, and prayer. And the Church for centuries has recognized the role of certain practices, or spiritual disciplines, that help massage the grace of God received in worship into the hearts of believers during their daily lives between Sundays. These practices center upon two of the three primary means of grace: Scripture and prayer. Christian disciplines, such as meditating on Scripture, confession, prayer, fellowship, sabbath, fasting, solitude, silence, and the like are nothing more than tools to help people listen to God speak to them from the Scriptures and then lead them in answering God as personally and honestly as they can in lives of prayer.

Two errors must be avoided as we think about Christian spiritual formation. First, it is not a "works righteous" attempt to earn God's favor; our formation is not meritorious. Again, Dallas Willard:

> "We must stop using the fact that we cannot *earn* grace (whether for justification or for sanctification) as an excuse for not energetically seeking to *receive* grace. Having been found by God, we then become seekers of ever-fuller life in him. Grace is opposed to earning, but not to effort. The realities of Christian spiritual formation are that we will not be transformed "into his likeness" by more information, or by infusion, inspiration, or ministrations alone. Though all of these have an important place, they never suffice, and reliance upon them alone explains the now common failure of committed Christians to rise much above a certain level of decency."

Also, Christian spiritual formation is not individualistic. God is our Father; Jesus is our Elder Brother; the Holy Spirit lives in all believers as the guarantee of our common inheritance as members of God's family. We are not alone in our discipleship to Christ. God places us in a church, in friendships, in a marriage, in a family so that we will have others to walk with in the Christian pilgrimage. We need others to read the scriptures with and help us understand and apply them; we need others to confess our sins and encourage us on to fuller obedience to God; we need the wisdom of others, who will gaze into our lives and counsel us how to faithfully live out our common life in the particular callings we have been given. This is a major reason why All Saints has had, and will maintain, an emphasis upon participation in small groups that meet regularly for study, discussion, and prayer. The formation of our individual interior lives only happens in and through a community committed to sharing the life and practice of the Christian faith together.

Service

Thirdly, we live as the Body of Christ through ***service***. Service, or self-giving, is probably the "avenue" that needs the least description because it is so plainly and regularly spoken of in the Scriptures. For example, when James and John ask Jesus to put them in charge of all of the people in his kingdom, second in command behind only him, Jesus responds: "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and

whoever would be first among you must be a slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mk 10:42-45) James and John conceived of Christianity as for them, of discipleship as consumerism, of Jesus and the Church as existing to make them happy and great. They come to Jesus attempting to force Him into a "your-life-poured-out-for-me" mold, and He refuses, insisting that He came to give His life away, to pour it out for others and their redemption. Why? Because Jesus is the revelation of God in the flesh and, as John learned and later taught, "God is love." (1 John 4:8) What is central to God's character is self-giving, self-donation, self-sacrifice - love, in other words. The God of the Bible is first and foremost a God who gives and serves; He is a God of grace. And the people who have come to know Him, experienced His grace, and share in the fellowship of His Triune life and love will be a giving and serving people, a people of grace.

This is the reality behind Jesus' parable about the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25, where Jesus speaks about His followers feeding Him, giving Him a drink, welcoming Him as a stranger, clothing Him, and visiting Him when He was sick and in prison. Jesus followers in the parable are confused and ask when they did these acts of service to Him. And He tells them, "As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." (Mt 25:40) The Apostle Paul speaks similarly when he issues the command "Serve the Lord" in the context of loving others with a "brotherly affection" by giving money, showing hospitality, and offering enemies food and drink. (Rom 12:9-21)

Though this aspect of living in Christ probably needs the least description, it typically needs the most exhortation. Christian Smith, in his book *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, has described the dominant view of God in our culture as "moralistic, therapeutic deism." The "therapeutic" aspect of that description arises from the rampant social assumption that the goal of life is not self-denial, sacrifice, or service, but to be happy and successful so that people may feel good about themselves. According to Smith God's job description in the minds of many of us is to restore our lost self-esteem, while we consume the offerings of others.

But Jesus desires more from his Church; He desires life for us. This, however, requires that we "deny [ourselves] and take up [our] cross daily and follow [Christ]. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for [Jesus'] sake will save it." (Lk 9:23-24) Christ is calling us to serve Him in word and deed, inside the church and outside the church, locally in Austin and internationally around the world, through giving money and through giving labor, in our individual vocations and in corporate initiatives, by making food and by making art, and more.

By God's grace may we answer His call. And may we begin with those near to us: our neighbors and neighborhoods, with our co-workers and our classmates. May All Saints live as salt and light in Austin, as a city within a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden.

THE BIBLICAL STORY

From *Creation Regained* by Albert M. Wolters

The Bible tells a single story, from the origin of all things in Genesis 1 to the consummation of all things in Revelation 22. One way to trace the flow of the biblical story is to describe it as a drama that unfolds in six acts. In act one God creates the world as his kingdom. His original purpose for the creation is revealed and he pronounces it very good (Gen. 1). Human beings are created as God's image to develop and care for the creation in communion with God (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15). In act two the whole of God's good creation, including all of human life, is contaminated by human rebellion (Gen. 3). A tension now emerges in the narrative between the goodness of creation and the evil that defiles it. This tension demands a resolution.

In act three God announces that resolution: He will crush sin and the disastrous effects that were unleashed by Adam and Eve's rebellion (Gen. 3:15). He chooses and forms a special people with the mission to bear his redemptive purpose for the world (Gen. 12:1-3; Ex. 19:3-6). They are called to be a community that embodies God's original good creational design for human life. This people is placed on the land to be a light to the nations and a channel of God's redemptive power to all peoples. God gives them the law, the sacrificial system, leaders called to be priests, kings and prophets, and much more-all to nourish a life that points to God's intention for all people. God's purpose appears to fail as the power of sin is too deeply rooted in the heart of Israel, and she is overcome by the darkness of her pagan neighbors. Yet through the prophets God promises that a future Savior will usher in a worldwide and never-ending kingdom in the power of the Spirit. The world will be renewed and sin and its effects forever done away with.

In act four that promise is kept when Jesus of Nazareth steps onto the stage of history. He announces that he has been sent to realize the expectation of Israel and to fulfill Israel's calling by bringing God's salvation to a broken world (Lk. 4:18-19). His announcement is that the kingdom of God has arrived, that God's power by the Spirit to liberate and heal creation is now present in him (Mark 1:14-15; Matt. 12:28). His life reveals and demonstrates the kingdom. He gathers Israel to be a rallying point for all nations. His death accomplishes the victory of the kingdom. His resurrection guarantees the reality of kingdom.

Before the resurrected Christ ascends to the Father he gathers together the disciples, the nucleus of a newly gathered Israel, and gives them their marching orders: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" John 20:21). This defines the existence of the community of Christ-followers: they are called to continue the witness to the kingdom that Jesus began. What Jesus did in Israel the church is to do in the whole world. The continuing mission of this community to witness to the kingdom constitutes act five of the biblical story. This "era of witness" has now lasted about two thousand years and will continue until Jesus returns to complete his work of renewal. That final work of the judgement and renewal of the entire creation constitutes the sixth and final act of world history.

This image of a six-act play highlights that there is a narrative unity, one story that binds all the parts together. It also shows us that there is a progressive, unfolding structure. The problem has been that we often don't understand the Bible as one unfolding story. Lesslie Newbigin tells the story of a learned Hindu scholar who once complained that Christians have misrepresented the Bible: "I can't understand why you missionaries present the Bible to us in India as a book of religion. It is not a book of religion – and anyway we have plenty of books of religion in India. We don't need any more! I find in your Bible a unique interpretation of universal history, the history of the whole of creation

and the history of the human race. And therefore a unique interpretation of the human person as a responsible actor in history. That is unique. There is nothing else in the whole religious literature of the world to put alongside it." His complaint is that the Bible tells one unfolding story about the world, the whole world – universal history, the true story of the world – yet Christians have reduced it to a book of religious or theological or even worldview truths.

How has this happened in the Christian community? The one story of the Bible is broken up into chunks or bits. Some break the Bible up into theological proof-texts and reconstruct the truths into a systematic theology. Others use devotionals to break the Bible into devotional bits that give immediate comforting promises and challenging exhortations. Others break the Bible into moral bits that provide ethical guidance. It is even possible to undermine the narrative structure of Scripture by reducing the Bible's teaching to a creation-fall-redemption worldview. To miss the grand narrative of Scripture is a serious matter; it not simply a matter of misinterpreting parts of Scripture. It is a matter of being oblivious to which story is shaping our lives. Some story will shape our lives. When the Bible is broken up into little bits and chunks – theological, devotional, spiritual, moral, or worldview bits and chunks – then these bits can be nicely fitted into the reigning story of our own culture with all its idols! One can be theologically orthodox, devotionally pious, morally upright, or maybe even have one's worldview categories straight, and yet be significantly shaped by the idolatrous Western story. The Bible loses its forceful and formative power by being absorbed into a more encompassing secular story.

This is not to say that there is no place for systematic theology, devotional reading of Scripture, biblical ethics, or an elaboration of the biblical worldview. In fact, all of these uses of Scripture are valid. We will argue later that worldview exposition is essential to equip the church in its mission of making known the good news. The problem comes when any of these uses of Scripture lose their grounding in the narrative context of Scripture and become abstracted chunks that are accommodated to a more ultimate story that is not rooted in Scripture.

This last statement calls for further elaboration of the world view significance of story. There is increasing interest today in narrative as a worldview category – even the ultimate worldview category. Central to this renewed attention to story is the recognition that human beings interpret and make sense of their world through a story. As Lesslie Newbigin puts it: "The way we understand human life depends on what conception we have of the human story. What is the real story of which my life story is a part?" That is to speak of story, not in literary categories, but as the essential shape of a worldview-founding narrative, as an interpretation of cosmic history that gives meaning to human life and all of reality. Story provides the deepest categorical framework in which human life is to be understood. There is no more fundamental way in which human beings interpret their lives than through a story.

Wolters, Albert M. *Creation Regained*. Second ed. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005. 123-26. Print.

THE GREATEST DRAMA EVER STAGED IS THE OFFICIAL CREED OF CHRISTENDOM

by Dorothy Sayers

Official Christianity, of late years, has been having what is known as “a bad press.” We are constantly assured that the churches are empty because preachers insist too much upon doctrine—”dull dogma,” as people call it. The fact is the precise opposite. It is the neglect of dogma that makes for dullness. The Christian faith is the most exciting drama that ever staggered the imagination of man—and the dogma is the drama.

That drama is summarised quite clearly in the creeds of the Church, and if we think it dull it is because we either have never really read those amazing documents, or have recited them so often and so mechanically as to have lost all sense of their meaning. The plot pivots upon a single character, and the whole action is the answer to a single central problem: What think ye of Christ? Before we adopt any of the unofficial solutions (some of which are indeed excessively dull)—before we dismiss Christ as a myth, an idealist, a demagogue, a liar or a lunatic—it will do no harm to find out what the creeds really say about Him. What does the Church think of Christ?

The Church’s answer is categorical and uncompromising, and it is this: That Jesus Bar-Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth, was in fact and in truth, and in the most exact and literal sense of the words, the God “by Whom all things were made.” His body and brain were those of a common man; His personality was the personality of God, so far as that personality could be expressed in human terms. He was not a kind of dæmon or fairy pretending to be human; He was in every respect a genuine living man. He was not merely a man so good as to be “like God”—He was God.

Now, this is not just a pious commonplace; it is not commonplace at all. For what it means is this, among other things: that for whatever reason God chose to make man as he is—limited and suffering and subject to sorrows and death—He had the honesty and the courage to take His own medicine. Whatever game He is playing with His creation, He has kept His own rules and played fair. He can exact nothing from man that He has not exacted from Himself. He has Himself gone through the whole of human experience, from the trivial irritations of family life and the cramping restrictions of hard work and lack of money to the worst horrors of pain and humiliation, defeat, despair and death. When He was a man, He played the man. He was born in poverty and died in disgrace and thought it well worth while.

Christianity is, of course, not the only religion that has found the best explanation of human life in the idea of an incarnate and suffering god. The Egyptian Osiris died and rose again; Æschylus in his play, The Eumenides, reconciled man to God by the theory of a suffering Zeus. But in most theologies, the god is supposed to have suffered and died in some remote and mythical period of pre-history. The Christian story, on the other hand, starts off briskly in St. Matthew’s account with a place and a date: “When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the King.” St. Luke, still more practically and prosaically, pins the thing down by a reference to a piece of government finance. God, he says, was made man in the year when Cæsar Augustus was taking a census in connection with a scheme of taxation. Similarly, we might date an event by saying that it took place in the year that Great Britain went off the gold standard. About thirty-three years later (we are informed) God was executed, for being a political nuisance, “under Pontius Pilate” —much as we might say, “when Mr. Joynson-Hicks was Home Secretary.” It is as definite and concrete as all that.

Possibly we might prefer not to take this tale too seriously—there are disquieting points about it. Here we had a man of Divine character walking and talking among us—and what did we find to do with Him? The common people, indeed, "heard Him gladly"; but our leading authorities in Church and State considered that He talked too much and uttered too many disconcerting truths. So we bribed one of His friends to hand Him over quietly to the police, and we tried Him on a rather vague charge of creating a disturbance, and had Him publicly flogged and hanged on the common gallows, "thanking God we were rid of a knave." All this was not very creditable to us, even if He was (as many people thought and think) only a harmless crazy preacher. But if the Church is right about Him, it was more discreditable still ; for the man we hanged was God Almighty.

So that is the outline of the official story—the tale of the time when God was the under-dog and got beaten, when He submitted to the conditions He had laid down and became a man like the men He had made, and the men He had made broke Him and killed Him. This is the dogma we find so dull—this terrifying drama of which God is the victim and hero.

If this is dull, then what, in Heaven's name, is worthy to be called exciting? The people who hanged Christ never, to do them justice, accused Him of being a bore—on the contrary; they thought Him too dynamic to be safe. It has been left for later generations to muffle up that shattering personality and surround Him with an atmosphere of tedium. We have very efficiently pared the claws of the Lion of Judah, certified Him "meek and mild," and recommended Him as a fitting household pet for pale curates and pious old ladies. To those who knew Him, however, He in no way suggested a milk-and-water person; they objected to Him as a dangerous firebrand. True, He was tender to the unfortunate, patient with honest inquirers and humble before Heaven; but He insulted respectable clergymen by calling them hypocrites; He referred to King Herod as "that fox"; He went to parties in disreputable company and was looked upon as a "gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners"; He assaulted indignant tradesmen and threw them and their belongings out of the Temple; He drove a coach-and-horses through a number of sacrosanct and hoary regulations; He cured diseases by any means that came handy, with a shocking casualness in the matter of other people's pigs and property; He showed no proper deference for wealth or social position; when confronted with neat dialectical traps, He displayed a paradoxical humour that affronted serious-minded people, and He retorted by asking disagreeably searching questions that could not be answered by rule of thumb. He was emphatically not a dull man in His human lifetime, and if He was God, there can be nothing dull about God either. But He had "a daily beauty in His life that made us ugly," and officialdom felt that the established order of things would be more secure without Him. So they did away with God in the name of peace and quietness.

"And the third day He rose again"; what are we to make of that? One thing is certain: if He was God and nothing else, His immortality means nothing to us; if He was man and no more, His death is no more important than yours or mine. But if He really was both God and man, then when the man Jesus died, God died too, and when the God Jesus rose from the dead, man rose too, because they were one and the same person. The Church binds us to no theory about the exact composition of Christ's Resurrection Body. A body of some kind there had to be, since man cannot perceive the Infinite otherwise than in terms of space and time. It may have been made from the same elements as the body that disappeared so strangely from the guarded tomb, but it was not that old, limited, mortal body, though it was recognisably like it. In any case, those who saw the risen Christ remained persuaded that life was worth living and death a triviality—an attitude curiously unlike that of the modern defeatist, who is firmly persuaded that life is a disaster and death (rather inconsistently) a major catastrophe.

Now, nobody is compelled to believe a single word of this remarkable story. God (says the Church) has created us perfectly free to disbelieve in Him as much as we choose. If we do disbelieve, then He and we must take the consequences in a world ruled by cause and effect. The Church says further, that man did, in fact, disbelieve, and that God did, in fact, take the consequences. All the same, if we are going to disbelieve a thing, it seems on the whole to be desirable that we should first find out what, exactly, we are disbelieving. Very well, then: “The right Faith is, that we believe that Jesus Christ is God and Man. Perfect God and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Who although He be God and Man, yet is He not two, but one Christ.” There is the essential doctrine, of which the whole elaborate structure of Christian faith and morals is only the logical consequence.

Now, we may call that doctrine exhilarating or we may call it devastating; we may call it revelation or we may call it rubbish; but if we call it dull, then words have no meaning at all. That God should play the tyrant over man is a dismal story of unrelieved oppression; that man should play the tyrant over man is the usual dreary record of human futility; but that man should play the tyrant over God and find Him a better man than himself is an astonishing drama indeed. Any journalist, hearing of it for the first time, would recognise it as News; those who did hear it for the first time actually called it News, and good news at that; though we are apt to forget that the word Gospel ever meant anything so sensational.

Perhaps the drama is played out now, and Jesus is safely dead and buried. Perhaps. It is ironical and entertaining to consider that once at least in the world’s history those words might have been spoken with complete conviction, and that was upon the eve of the Resurrection.

Sayers, Dorothy L.. *The Whimsical Christian*. 1st ed. New York City: First Collier Books, 1987. 11-16. Print.

A Word About Praising

from *Reflections on the Psalms* by C.S. Lewis

It is possible (and it is to be hoped) that this chapter will be unnecessary for most people. Those who were never thick-headed enough to get into the difficulty it deals with may even find it funny. I have not the least objection to their laughing; a little comic relief in the discussion does no harm, however serious the topic may be. (In my own experience, the funniest things have occurred in the gravest and most sincere conversations).

When I first began to draw near to belief in God and even for some time after it had been given to me, I found a stumbling block in the demand so clamorously made by all religious people that we should "praise" God; still more in the suggestion that God Himself demanded it. We all despise the man who demands continued assurance of his own virtue, intelligence or delightfulness; we despise still more the crowd of people round every dictator, every millionaire, every celebrity, who gratify that demand. Thus a picture, at once ludicrous and horrible, both of God and of His worshippers threatened to appear in my mind. The Psalms were especially troublesome in this way – "Praise the Lord" "O praise the Lord with me," "Praise Him" (And why, incidentally,did praising God always consist in telling other people to praise Him? Even in telling whales, snowstorms, etc, to go on doing what they would certainly do whether we told them or not?). Worse still was the statement put into God's own mouth, "whoso offereth me thanks and praise, he honoreth me" (50, 23). It was hideously like saying, "What I most want is to be told that I am good and great." Worst of all was the suggestion of the very silliest Pagan bargaining, that of the savage who makes offerings to his idol when the fishing is good and beats it when he has caught nothing. More than once the Psalmist seemed to be saying, "You like praise. Do this for me, and you shall have some." Thus in 54 the poet begins "save me" (I), and in verse 6, adds an inducement, "An offering of a free heart will I give thee, and praise thy name." Again and again the speaker asks to be saved from death on the ground that if God lets His suppliants die HE will get no more praise from them, for the ghosts in Sheol cannot praise (30,10; 88,10; 119,175). And mere quantity of praise seemed to count; "seven times a day do I praise thee" (119,164). It was extremely distressing. It made one think what one least wanted to think. Gratitude to God, reverence to Him, obedience to Him, I thought I could understand; not this perpetual eulogy. Nor were matters mended by a modern author who talked of God's "right" to be praised.

I still think "right" is a bad way of expressing it, but I believe I now see what that author meant. It is perhaps easiest to begin with inanimate objects which have no rights. What do we mean when we say that a picture is "admirable"? We certainly don't mean that it is admired (that's as may be) for bad work is admired by thousands and good work may be ignored. Nor that it "deserves" admiration in the sense in which a candidate "deserves" a high mark from the examiners – i.e. that a human being will have suffered injustice if it is not awarded. The sense in which the picture "deserves" or "demands" admiration is rather this; that admiration is the correct, adequate, appropriate, response to it, that, if paid, admiration will not be "thrown away", and that if we do not admire we shall be stupid, insensible, and great losers, we shall have missed something. In that way many objects both h in Nature and in Art may be said to deserve, or merit, or demand, admiration. It was from this end, which will seem to some irreverent, that I found it best to approach the idea that God "demands" praise. He is that Object to admire which (or, if you like, to appreciate which) is simply to be awake, to have entered the real world; not to appreciate which is to have lost the greatest experience, and in the end to have lost all. The incomplete and crippled lives of those who are tone deaf, have never been in love, never known true friendship, never cared for a good book, never enjoyed the feel of the morning air of their cheeks,

never (I am one of these) enjoyed football, are faint images of it.

But of course this is not all. God does not only "demand" praise as the supremely beautiful and all-satisfying Object. He does apparently command it as lawgiver. The Jews were told to sacrifice. We are under an obligation to go to church. But this was a difficulty only because I did not then understand any of what I have tried to say above in Chapter V. I did not see that it is in the process of being worshipped that God communicates His presence to men. It is not of course the only way. But for many people at many times the "fair beauty of the Lord" is revealed chiefly or only while they worship Him together. Even in Judaism the essence of the sacrifice was not really that men gave bulls and goats to God, but that by their so doing God gave Himself to men; in the central act of our own worship of course this is far clearer – there it is manifestly, even physically, God who gives and we who receive. The miserable idea that God should in any sense need, or crave for, our worship like a vain woman wanting compliments, or a vain author presenting his new books to people who have never met or heard of him, is implicitly answered by the words "If I be hungry I will not tell thee" (50,12). Even if such an absurd Deity could be conceived, He would hardly come to us, the lowest of rational creatures, to gratify His appetite. I don't want my dog to bark approval of my books. Now that I come to think of it, there are some humans whose enthusiastically favorable criticism would not much gratify me.

But the most obvious fact about praise – whether of God or anything – strangely escaped me. I thought of it in terms of compliment, approval, or the giving of honor. I had never noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise unless (sometimes even if) shyness or the fear of boring others is deliberately brought in to check it. The world rings with praise – lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favorite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favorite game – praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians or scholars. I had not noticed how the humblest, and at the same time most balanced and capacious minds, praised most, while the cranks, misfits, and malcontents praised least. The good critics found something to praise in many imperfect works; the bad ones continually narrowed the list of books we might be allowed to read. The healthy and unaffected man, even if luxuriously brought up and widely experienced in good cookery, could praise a very modest meal: the dyspeptic and the snob found fault with all. Except where intolerably adverse circumstances interfere, praise almost seems to be inner health made audible. Nor does it cease to be so when, through lack of skill, the forms of its expression are very uncouth or even ridiculous. heaven knows, many poems of praise addressed to an earthly beloved are as bad as our bad hymns, and an anthology of love poems for public and perpetual use would probably be as sore a trial to literary taste as Hymns Ancient and Modern. I had not noticed either that just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it: "Isn't she lovely? Wasn't it glorious? Don't you think that magnificent" The Psalmists in telling everyone to praise God are doing what all men do when they speak of what they care about. My whole, more general difficulty about the praise of God depended on my absurdly denying to us, as regards the supremely Valuable, what we delight to do, what we indeed cant' help doing, about everything else we value.

I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed. It is frustrating to have discovered a new author and not to be able to tell anyone how good he is; to come suddenly at the turn of the road, upon some mountain valley of unexpected grandeur and then to have to keep silent

because the people with you care for it no more than for a tin can in the ditch; to hear a good joke and find no one to share it with (the perfect hearer died a year ago). This is so even when our expressions are inadequate, as of course they usually are. But how if one could really and fully praise even such things to perfection – utterly "get out" in poetry or music of paint the upsurge of appreciation that almost bursts you? Then indeed object would be fully appreciated and our delight would have attained perfect development. The worthier the object, the more intense this delight would be. If it were possible for a created soul fully (I mean, up to the full measure conceivable in a finite being) to "appreciate", that is to love and delight in, the worthiest object of all, and simultaneously at every moment to give this delight perfect expression, then that soul would be in supreme beautitude. It is along these lines that I find it easiest to understand the Christian doctrine that "heaven" is a state in which angels now, and men hereafter, are perpetually employed in praising God. This does not mean, as it can so dismally suggest, that it is like "being in Church". For our "services" both in their conduct and in our power to participate, are merely attempts at worship; never fully successful, often 99.9 percent failures, sometimes total failures. We are not riders but pupils in the riding school; for most of us the falls and bruises, the aching muscles and the severity of the exercise, far outweigh those few moments in which we were, to our own astonishment, actually galloping without terror and without disaster. To see what the doctrine means, we must suppose ourselves to be in perfect love with God – drunk with, drowned in, dissolved by, that delight which, far from remaining pent up within ourselves as incommunicable, hence hardly tolerable, bliss, flows out from us incessantly again in effortless and perfect expression, our joy no more separable from the praise in which it liberates and utters itself than the brightness a mirror receives is separable from the brightness it sheds. The Scotch catechism says that man's chief end is "to glorify God and enjoy Him forever". But we shall then know that these are the same thing. Fully to enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify Him, god is inviting us to enjoy Him.

Meanwhile, of course, we are merely, as Donne says, tuning our instruments. The tuning up of the orchestra can be itself delightful, but only to those who can in some measure, however little, anticipate the symphony. The Jewish sacrifices, and even our own most sacred rites, as they actually occur in human experience, are, like the tuning, promise, not performance. Hence, like the tuning, they many have in them much duty and little delight or none. But the duty exists for the delight. When we carry out our "religious duties" we are like people digging channels in a waterless land, in order that when at last the water comes, it may find them ready. I mean, for the most part. There are happy moments, even now, when a trickle creeps along the dry beds; and happy souls to whom this happens often.

As for the element of bargaining in the Psalms (Do this and I will praise you), that silly dash of Paganism certainly existed. The flame does not ascend pure from the altar. But the impurities are not its essence. And we are not all in a position to despise even the crudest Psalmist on this score. Of course we would not blunder in our words like them. But there is, for ill as well as for good, a wordless prayer. I have often, on my knees, been shocked to find what sort of thoughts I have, for a moment, been addressing to God; what infantile placations I was really offering, what claims I have really made, even what absurd adjustments or compromises I was, half- consciously, proposing. There is a Pagan, savage heart in me somewhere. For unfortunately the folly and idiot-cunning of Paganism seem to have far more power of surviving than its innocent or even beautiful elements. It is easy, once you have power, to silence the pipes, still the dances, disfigure the statues, and forget the stories; but not easy to kill the savage, the greedy, frightened creature now cringing, now blustering, in one's soul – the creature to whom God may well say"though thoughtest I am even such a one as thyself" (50,21).

But all this, as I have said, will be illuminating to only a few of my readers. To the others, such a comedy of errors, so circuitous a journey to reach the obvious, will furnish occasion or charitable laughter.

Lewis, C.S. “A Word About Praising” in *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt, 1986) p.90-98.

GENIUS OF REFORMED LITURGY

by Nicholas Paul Wolterstorff

When the Swiss Reformers rebelled against the liturgical traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, they did so in terms of a coherent, controlling idea, a new vision. They had what we now recognize as a distinctively "Reformed" view of what we should do in liturgy and how we should understand it.

Under the leadership of John Calvin and others, these Reformers put their vision into practice and in doing so brought about the most radical liturgical reform that the Christian church has ever known. Note the word reform. The Reformers saw themselves not as beginning over but as returning to the liturgy of the early church.

THE BEGINNINGS OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

We get a glimpse of what that early liturgy was like in the writings of Justin Martyr. "On the day named after the sun," says Justin, "all who live in city or countryside assemble." He then draws the following picture of a Christian liturgy in Rome around A.D. 150:

The service opened with someone reading the writings of the apostles and prophets "for as long as time permitted." When the reading was finished, the 'presider' addressed the people in a sermon, exhorting them "to imitate the splendid things" they had heard.

Following this "service of the Word," the people offered intercessory prayers, as Justin says, "for ourselves, for him who has just been enlightened [just baptized], and for all men everywhere." In Rome, as throughout the early church, the people stood during prayers with hands raised, and responded with "Amen."

After the prayers the people greeted each other with a kiss. Then they celebrated the Eucharist, or Lord's Supper. Along with other offerings, the people brought bread and a cup of wine mixed with water to the presider. The presider took the gifts and offered prayer "glorifying the Father of the universe through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," uttering "a lengthy thanksgiving [Eucharist] because the Father has judged us worthy of these gifts." After the people had assented with an "Amen," the deacons distributed the gifts.

An important thing to note in this liturgy is that it had two main parts—the service of the Word and the service of the Lord's Supper—and that the intercessory prayers formed a bridge between the two. The church (except for certain sects) followed this liturgical structure in all times and at all places until 1525.

Equally important in the liturgy described by Justin is the absence of division between clergy and people. The extent to which Justin refers to the people as the subject or object of the actions is striking: we pray, we eat, we greet one another, we say "Amen," the presider exhorts us. The liturgy belonged to the people.

How did these early Christians view the Lord's Supper? As the Greek word itself suggests (eucharisteo = give thanks), the overarching context was one of thanksgiving to God for creation and redemption. But the eucharist was more than thanksgiving. It was also an act offellowship, an offering (in fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy of the pure offering of the Gentiles—Mai. 1:10-12), and a memorial, a

remembrance of Christ's passion.

Giving thanks, fellowshipping, presenting an offering, and doing in memorial — all these are elements of devotion we address to God. But Justin also saw the eucharist as God's gracious act toward us. We are nourished and transformed by the eating and drinking, for "through the word of prayer that comes from him, the food over which the eucharist has been spoken becomes the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus."

LATER DEVELOPMENTS

The liturgy as the Reformers knew it in central Europe of the early sixteenth-century was profoundly different from this second-century liturgy described by Justin. The enduring structure of Word and sacrament was still there. But across the intervening centuries the liturgy as a whole had been radically altered.

The difference in how the liturgy looked, how it sounded, and how it was done would have struck one first. The people no longer spoke; priests and choir alone voiced words. The people no longer understood what the presider said; Latin had remained in the liturgy even when the people no longer understood a word of it. The prayers were no longer "of the people"; instead they were recited inaudibly by the priest. Sermons had all but disappeared. And the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper were now rarely shared with the people.

To these and many other such practices and abuses, the Reformers reacted intensely. They recognized that the liturgy, which in the early church had given equal position to Word and sacrament, now placed almost total emphasis on its eucharistic component. The first half of the liturgy (the service of the Word) had lost its independent significance and was understood merely as preparation for the eucharist.

The eucharist too was understood and experienced in a far different way than it had once been. Gradually, over the years, people began to believe that liturgy was something the clergy did on behalf of the people. And at the heart of what God had assigned the clergy to do was celebrate the sacraments — especially the sacrament of the eucharist.

By the time of the Reformation the church came to think of a sacrament as something that both symbolized and conveyed a gift of divine grace. That is to say, in the Lord's Supper the bread and the wine effected the grace — not God by way of the bread and wine, but the bread and wine themselves. The priest was thus a dispenser of grace.

The church went on to say that once the bread and wine had been consecrated by the priest, these elements actually became the body and blood of Christ. The bread and wine were "transubstantiated." So, gradually the sacrament came to be viewed not only as a memorial of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross but also as a "propitiatory sacrifice" in which God's favor could be secured.

What did all this mean for the layperson? If we keep in mind the insistence that the bread and wine are transubstantiated into Christ's body and blood, so that Christ becomes bodily present, the answer will not be hard to guess: adoration. Adoration of the Christ who is bodily present under the appearance of bread and wine became for the laity the central worship act.

If we put all these features together, what leaps to the eye is that the medieval church had a

liturgy in which, to an extraordinary degree, God's actions were lost from view. The actions were all the people's. The priest addresses God. The priest brings about Christ's bodily presence, and the laypeople adore Christ under the bread-like and winelike appearances. When they receive the consecrated bread from the hands of the priest the people are infused with grace.

The Reformers rejected the sole emphasis on the Lord's Supper, working to regain the balance between Word and sacrament...

The great Catholic liturgical scholar J. A. Jungmann puts it like this: "Hearing Mass was reduced to a matter of securing favors from God."

THE REFORMATION OF THE LITURGY

The Reformers rejected the sole emphasis on the Lord's Supper, working to regain the balance between Word and sacrament that had been present in the liturgy of Justin Martyr's day. In the medieval church, as we saw earlier, that balance was lost. The Scriptures were read inaudibly in an alien tongue, the sermon all but disappeared, and in theory and practice the entire service of the Word lost its significance and was treated merely as preparation for the Lord's Supper.

Word The Reformers recovered the audible reading of Scripture, in the language of the people, followed by explanation and application in the sermon. They stressed the strong tie between the Scripture reading and sermon, and saw the sermon genuinely as "God's Word." God's voice, said Calvin, resounds in "the mouths and the tongues" of preachers, so that hearing ministers preach is like hearing God himself speak. God "uses the ministry of men to declare openly his will to us by mouth as a sort of delegated work, not by transferring to them his right and honor, but only that through their mouths he may do his own work—just as a workman uses a tool to do his work." In short, through the sovereign action of the Spirit the minister speaks the Word of God—not in the weak sense that he now reflects on the anciently spoken Word of God, but in the radical sense that God now speaks through him. In listening to church proclamation we hear God speaking.

The Reformers also insisted that we must not hear this Word from afar—that we must receive this Word of God in humility and faith. For such reception, we need the work of the Spirit. So these Reformers introduced into their liturgies the "prayer of illumination" before Scripture and sermon, asking for the presence of the Spirit. Indeed, it can be said that it was the Swiss Reformers who brought the Spirit back into the Western liturgy.

Already we have a good grasp of the controlling idea of Reformed liturgy. But it may help to also look at the Reformers' views on the Lord's Supper.

Chapter xviii of Book IV of Calvin's Institutes is a sustained attack on the Mass as it was practiced and understood in central Europe in Calvin's time. At what he calls the "crowning point" of his discussion, Calvin says that whereas "the Supper itself is a gift of God, which ought to have been received with thanksgiving, ...the sacrifice of the Mass is represented as paying a price to God, which he should receive by way of satisfaction. There is as much difference between this sacrifice and the sacrament of the Supper as there is between giving and receiving." The Lord has "given us a Table at which to feast, not an altar upon which to offer a victim; he has not consecrated priests to offer sacrifice, but ministers to distribute the sacred banquet."

To fully grasp what Calvin is saying here, it is important to realize that though he adamantly denies

that the Lord's Supper is a sacrifice of propitiation for sin, he repeatedly insists that it is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. "The Lord's Supper cannot be without a sacrifice of this kind," he says, "in which, while we proclaim his death and give thanks, we do nothing but offer a sacrifice of praise."

Yet the fundamental structure of the Lord's Supper for Calvin is not sacrifice but sacrament: God acting and we receiving, rather than we acting and God receiving. And, just as in proclamation, God's action must be received in faith and applied by the Spirit. The eucharistic portion of Calvin's Strassbourg and Geneva liturgies opens with a prayer for faithful receiving.

HERE AND NOW

By now the point will be clear: the liturgy as the Reformers understood and practiced it consists of God acting and us responding in faith through the work of the Spirit. The controlling idea in Reformed worship is that God acts in worship and that we are not to hold God's actions at arm's length but to appropriate them into our innermost being. Worship is a meeting between God and his people, a meeting in which both parties act—God as the initiator and we as the responders.

In the Supper, said Calvin, God seals (confirms) the promises he has made to us in Jesus Christ. Here and now he says that his promises are "for real." Calvin's point is not that the bread and wine are signs and seals of God's promises. His point is that God himself here and now acts, by way of the bread and wine, to authenticate his promises.

But more than that. Not only does God promise in the Lord's Supper that we shall be mystically united with the flesh and blood of his Son. Through his Spirit he also effectuates this promise. If we approach the Supper in faith, our faith will be nourished and strengthened, and thereby our unity with Christ in his humanity will be deepened. In "the sacred mystery of the Supper", says Calvin, God "inwardly fulfills what he outwardly designates."

Along with this emphasis on God as active in the sacrament comes Calvin's sharp criticism of the Roman church for the infrequency of its lay communion. "What we have so far said of the sacrament," he remarks, "abundantly shows that it was not ordained to be received only once a year … It should have been done far differently: The Lord's Table should have been spread at least once a week for the assembly of Christians… All, like hungry men, should flock to such a bounteous repast."

Zwingli felt differently about the matter. He saw the Lord's Supper not as a means of grace but as a mode of thanksgiving. And so, he took the momentous step of destroying the enduring shape of the liturgy, pulling apart its two high points of Word and sacrament, disposing them into two separate services, a preaching service and a Lord's Supper service, and specifying that the Lord's Supper service be held four times a year. It is ironic that all the confessions of the Reformed churches should side with Calvin against Zwingli on the theology of the Lord's Supper, while their liturgies almost always side with Zwingli against Calvin.

FINELY TUNED BALANCE

To understand why the Reformed liturgy acquired the character it did over the centuries, we should note one additional curious feature, present there since the beginning: although the people were frequently and lengthily exhorted to receive God's actions with praise and thanksgiving, they were given scant opportunity to do so in the liturgy. This lack violated everything that the Reformers said about the liturgy. In their liturgical documents and theology they reveal a passionate concern that our

recital of God's actions not remain "out there somewhere" but be appropriated in faith and gratitude. Surely expressions of praise and gratitude are the appropriate implementation of this vision. Yet the exhortation tone overwhelmed worshipful expression.

Of course, one of the hallmarks of the Reformed churches —from the very beginning—has been the vigorous congregational singing of psalms and hymns. And certainly such singing is rightly seen as an act of worship and praise. Yet it must in honesty be granted that over the centuries this praise function of the congregation's singing has all too often been lost from view. H. O. Old expresses the point well: The singing "is often understood as a decoration of the service of worship, a way of achieving splendor, or perhaps as the means of giving the bitter pill of religion the chocolate coating of either culture or entertainment. At other times it has been understood as a way of achieving 'audience participation' or as a means of getting the people to respond to the preaching or praying of the pastor. At still other times it has been understood as being primarily a means of expressing the theme of the sermon or the 'Christian year,' making it a pedagogical device." Too seldom has singing been understood as the congregation's response of praise to God's actions.

Perhaps this theme of response, along with serious reflection on the appropriate frequency of celebrating the Lord's Supper, is the greatest challenge to us in the Reformed churches as we begin our fifth century: we should strive to enrich the response dimension of the liturgy so that it is no longer overwhelmed by the proclamation dimension, but exists with it in finely tuned balance. In most places preaching has rightly remained alive among us (though perhaps too seldom is it understood as God speaking). If now we can enliven the response dimension, then finally the genius of the liturgy as understood in the Reformed tradition will have come into its own: in the liturgy God and his people interact in the power of the Spirit.

Wolterstorff, Nicholas Paul. "Genius of Reformed Liturgy" *Reformed Worship* Vol. December. (1986) 07 Feb. 2014 <http://www.reformedworship.org/article/december-1986/genius-reformed-liturgy>.

EXCERPTS FROM *DESIRING THE KINGDOM*

by James K. A. Smith

"The dialogical nature of Christian worship is a give-and-take, back-and-forth interaction: God calls us; by his grace we respond by gathering, invoking his grace and mercy; and God in turn responds to our cry. This give-and-take indicates that we are dealing with a personal God who takes the initiative to engage in a relationship with humanity. It is an exchange of gifts that indicates God's gracious reciprocity. Implicit in this is also something fundamental about the nature of humanity: human flourishing is dependent upon our being oriented to and defined by this relationship."

CALL TO WORSHIP

"Week after week, for millennia and around the globe, a peculiar people is gathered by a call to worship – a call that, in a sense, goes out before the service even begins, but that is then formally declared in the opening of the service in the 'call to worship,' often from the Psalms. ... The rather mundane fact that people show up is, however, an indicator of something fundamental: that a people has gathered in response to a call. 'Whenever we gather for public worship... it is because we have been summoned.'"

CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON

"Now that we have been invited into a relationship with a holy God and been reminded of what he requires, a bright spotlight is shone upon not just our failures and trespasses but also our inability to do otherwise on our own. Rather than repressing this stark, haunting fact – of which we're not a little embarrassed and ashamed – and rather than papering over it or ignoring it, the practice of Christian worship calls us to own up to it in open confession, where we are honest with God about our transgressions and agree with God that they are violations of his law. We confess both our proclivity and actions that run against the grain of the universe.

Our assurance does not stem from our own accomplishment, nor does God's forgiveness stem from simply dismissing the demands of justice or ignoring the brokenness of creation; rather, God himself takes on our sin and its effects in the Son, on the cross, who also triumphs over them in the resurrection. Our brokenness and violence are met by the grace of God, who suffered violence for our sake and in turn graces and empowers us to reorder our desires, to recalibrate our ultimate aims, and to take up once again our vocation as humans, to be his image bearers to and for the world."

SCRIPTURE AND SERMON

The Scriptures function asthe script of the worshipping community, the story that narrates the identity of the people of God, the constitution of this baptismal city, and the fuel of the Christian imagination. ... Though the entirety of Christian worship inscribes the story of God in Christ into our imaginations, the moment of Scripture reading and proclamation of the Word in preaching is the most intense or explicit moment for the articulation of this story. This is why 'worship is Scripture's home, its native soil, its most congenial habitat. ... It is in liturgy... that Christians are schooled and exercised in the scriptural logic of the faith.' In particular, the Scriptures provide the story of which we find ourselves a part, and thus the narration and absorption of the story is crucial to give us resources for knowing what we ought to do. The end of ingesting the story -- 'eating the book' – is in order to be and become a certain kind of person and a certain kind of people."

PRAYER

In intercessory prayer, we are reminded... that we are called, even chosen, as a people not for our own sake but for the sake of the world. Just as Adam and Eve were created to be God's image bearers in and to the world, and just as Israel was chosen in order to be a light unto the nations, so the church is called to be the people of God to and for the world. It is because we are God's ambassadors and image bearers, charged with caring for creation, that we bring to him the concerns of creation, praying for each other, for the church, and for the world at large.

THE CREED

"The Creed is a moment in worship that gives us much to think about in the sense of conscious, intentional reflection; it teaches us something, formulated in assertions and propositions, and makes ontological claims about God, the world, and ourselves. Indeed, what is articulated in the Creed has been behind much of what we've been doing in worship. ... What we believe is not a matter of intellectualizing salvation but rather a matter of knowing what to love, knowing to whom we pledge allegiance. ... In reciting it each week, we rehearse the skeletal structure of the story in which we find our identity. Its cadences become part of who we are, and they function as rival cadences, sometimesdoing battle in our imagination with the cadences of other pledges that would ask for our allegiance and loyalty."

EUCHARIST

Christian worship culminates in a sacrament that is a compacted microcosm of the whole of worship: the Eucharist, or Lord's Supper. This happens in many different ways across Christian traditions, but try to imagine one selective snapshot: Recapitulating much that has gone before (law, confession, absolution, Scripture, proclamation, prayer, and thanksgiving) — liturgical practices that have called upon our ears and our knees, our eyes and our tongues, our hands and our noses — now our mouths, with a sort of sanctified salivation, begin to anticipate a new role for taste.

"On the night he was handed over to suffering and death; our Lord Jesus Christ..." (1 Cor. 11:26)

"The tangible display and performance of the gospel in the Lord's Supper is a deeply affecting practice. Its sights and smells, its rhythms and movements, are the sort of thing that seep into our imaginations and become second nature. Just as a song makes words stick in our memory, so the sights, smells, and rhythms of the Eucharist seem to make the story both come alive and wriggle into our imaginations in a way that it wouldn't otherwise."

OFFERING

"This is not really an exchange. It certainly isn't a mutual or reciprocal gift exchange since there is a radical disproportion between the gifts we've received and the gifts we now offer 'in return.' Rather, the offering is an expression of gratitude. It is a symbolic but concrete indication that the 'commerce' between God and humanity is not a contract but a covenant, which traffics not in commodities but gifts."

BENEDICTION

"While we have been engaged with the triune God in the practices of worship, in a dialogic dance of gift and call, call and response, pleading and receiving, eating and drinking, we have also been practicing (for) the kingdom. We've gathered to do what we were made for —praise and worship — and in so doing, we have been learning a language, participating in a story, undergoing training to fulfill our mission as the communal imago Dei. Christian worship is an affective school, a pedagogy of desire in which we learn not how to be spiritual or religious, but how to be human, how to take up the vocation given to us at creation. And now we are sent from this practice arena — which is the real world — into the world to be witnesses by being God's image bearers, who cultivate the world in a way that exemplifies Jesus's perfect 'cultural' labor. That now includes our cultural labor or being the church, the body of Christ, in a way that is hospitable and inviting — in a way that invites others to find their identity and vocation in Christ, to become 'new creations' and thus become the humans they were called to be. In short, when we are sent as witnesses, we are sent as evangelists to proclaim the good news, to announce the story of God's redeeming and restoring a peculiar people, graced to bear his image."

Smith, James K. A. *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009. Print.

EXCERPTS FROM *CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE*

by Anthony A. Hoekema

CHAPTER 2: Man as a Created Person

One of the basic presuppositions of the Christian view of man is belief in God as the Creator, which leads to the view that the human person does not exist autonomously or independently, but as a creature of God. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ... So God created man" (Gen. 1:1-27).

An obvious implication of the fact of creation is that all created reality is completely dependent on God. Werner Foerster puts it this way: "Thus in becoming, being, and perishing, all creation is wholly dependent on the will of the Creator."[1]

The Scriptures make it very clear that all created things and all created beings are totally dependent on God. "Thou [God] hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas with all that is in them; and though preservest all of them" (Neh. 9:6, RSV). That God preserves all his creatures, including human beings, implies that they are dependent on him for their continued existence. In his address to the Athenians Paul affirms that God "gives all men life and breath and everything else," and that "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:25, 28). We owe, Paul is saying, our very breath to God; we exist only in him; in every move we make we are dependent on him. We cannot lift a finger apart from God's will.

Man is not only a creature, however; he is also a person. And to be a person means to have a kind of independence – not absolute but relative. To be a person means to be able to make decisions, to set goals, and to move in the directions of those goals. It means to possess freedom[2]– at least in the sense of being able to make one's own choices. The human being is not a robot whose course is totally determined by forces outside of him; he has the power of self-determination and self-direction. To be a person means, to use Leonard Verduin's picturesque expression, to be a "creature of option."[3]

In sum, the human being is both a creature and a person; he or she is a created person. This, now, is the central mystery of man: how can man be both a creature and a person at the same time? To be a creature, as we have seen, means absolute dependence on God; to be a person means relative independence. To be a creature means that I cannot move a finger or utter a word apart from God; to be a person means that when my fingers are moved, I move them, and that when words are uttered by my lips, I utter them. To be creatures means that God is the potter and we are the clay (Rom. 9:21); to be persons means that we are the ones who fashion our lives by our own decisions (Gal. 6:7-8).

I have called this the central mystery of man because to us it seems deeply mysterious that man can be both a creature and a person at the same time. Dependence and freedom seem to us to be incompatible concepts. We grant that a child is completely dependent on his or her parents in infancy, but we note that as that child develops in the direction of greater freedom and maturity, the child becomes less dependent on his or her parents. This we can understand. But how are we to conceive of a relationship in which complete dependence on God and personal freedom to make our own decisions continue to go hand in hand?

Though we cannot rationally comprehend how it is possible for the human being to be a creature and

1. *"Kitzō,"* TDNT, 3:1011.
2. More will be said in Chap. 12 about the meaning of the concept of freedom when applied to human beings.
3. Verduin develops this thought extensively in Chap. 5 of his *Somewhat less than God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970).

a person at the same time, clearly that is what we must think. Denial of either side of this paradox will fail to do justice to the biblical picture. The Bible teaches both man's creatureliness and man's personhood. Sometimes it addresses the human being as a creature; for example, when it speaks of God as the potter and man as the clay (Rom. 9:21). More often, however, it addresses him or her as a person: "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (Josh. 24:15); "We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20).

Our theological understanding of man must, therefore, keep both of these truths clearly in focus. All secular anthropologies fail to take into account human creatureliness and therefore give a distorted view of man. Any view of the human being that fails to see him or her as centrally related to, totally dependent on, and primarily responsible to God falls short of the truth. On the other hand, all deterministic anterministic anthropologies which treat humans as if they were puppets or robots, perhaps with God pulling the strings or pushing the buttons, fail to do justice to human personhood, and therefore give an equally distorted view of man. Robert D. Brinsmead stated this point well:

"The creaturehood and the personhood of man must be held both together and in tension. When theology stresses creaturehood and subordinates personhood, a hard-faced determinism surfaces and man is dehumanized. ... When personhood is stressed to the exclusion of creaturehood, man is deified and God's sovereignty is compromised. The Lord is left standing helplessly in the wings as if man had the power to veto the plans and purposes of God." [4]...

Scripture teaches that God saves man by placing him into a covenant relationship with him. Since God is the Creator and man is a creature, it is obvious that God must take the initiative in placing his people into such a covenantal relationship – hence we say that the covenant of grace is unilateral in its origin. But since man is a person, he has responsibilities in this covenant, and must fulfill his covenant obligations – hence we say that the covenant of grace is bilateral in its fulfillment.

Further, the understanding of man as a created person helps us to answer the much-debated question of whether the covenant of grace is conditional or unconditional. Because man is a creature, the covenant is unconditional in its origin; God graciously establishes his covenant with his people apart from any conditions they must fulfill. But since man is also a person, God requires that his people fulfill certain conditions in order to enjoy the blessings of the covenant. But people can only fulfill these conditions through the enabling power of God. In the covenant of grace, therefore, both God's sovereign grace and man's serious responsibility come into focus. Hence the Bible contains both covenant promises and covenant threats, and we must do full justice to both...

Enough has been said to show that the understanding of man as a created person is both important and relevant. Theologians like myself who stand in the Reformed or Calvinistic tradition have commonly emphasized the creaturely aspect of man (his total dependence on God), and therefore the ultimate sovereignty of God in every area of life, particularly in the work of saving his people from their sins. Arminian theologians, on the other hand usually lay all the stress on man's personhood. Hence when they speak of the process of salvation they will emphasize the importance of man's voluntary decision and continuing faithfulness to God. Keeping in mind the paradox that man is both a creature and a person will help us do full justice to both the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. Those of us how stand in the Reformed tradition must not neglect or deny the responsibility of man; those who stand in the Arminian tradition should not neglect of deny the ultimate sovereignty of God.

Hoekema, Anthony A. *Created in God's Image.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdsmans, 1986) p.5-7, 9-10.

4. "Man as Creature and Person," *Verdict* (Aug. 1978):21-22.

WHAT IS REFORMED ABOUT REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY?

by Richard Pratt

People hear about Reformed Theological Seminary and often wonder why we call ourselves "Reformed." Everyone knows the term basically means, "to be shaped or formed as before." But what does it mean to call a seminary Reformed? What is Reformed about RTS?

Nearly forty years ago, the founders of RTS chose this name to identify the purpose of our seminary. Along with other evangelical seminaries throughout the world, our primary goal is to develop leaders for service in the body of Christ. RTS has helped to prepare thousands of pastors, counselors, missionaries, evangelists, teachers, youth ministers, and other church leaders in a variety of Christian denominations.

At the same time, however, our program at RTS is different from many evangelical seminaries. We emphasize a set of concerns that make us Reformed. What are these concerns? We can summarize our Reformed distinctives in three ways: Our Reformed Roots, Our Reformed Theology, and Our Reformed Hope.

OUR REFORMED ROOTS

We call ourselves Reformed because RTS is rooted in the Protestant Reformation. In the sixteenth century, many believers protested against false teachings in the church and returned to the true gospel under the leadership of Reformers such as Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin. The term "Reformed" was associated primarily with Calvin's work in the church of Geneva, but all Protestant Reformers held certain cardinal views in common.

At RTS, our historical roots extend to the central beliefs that characterized the Protestant Reformation. These commitments can be summarized in three basic doctrines: Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, and Sola Fide.

Sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone) expresses our strong commitment to the unquestionable authority of the Bible. The early Reformers saw many errors in the church of their day. Many of these false teachings stemmed from a denial of Biblical authority. The outlooks of human leaders in the church had risen to a level of authority equal to the Word of God. These human traditions led the church away from truth, and Protestants countered these false views by affirming the unique and supreme authority of the Bible.

At RTS, we believe it is very important to reaffirm the Bible as the final authority for God's people. In many circles, the place of Scripture has been usurped by human traditions once again. Modern science, philosophy, and popular opinion have led many to deny the authority of Scripture. In response to these current problems, RTS affirms with the Reformers that the Bible is the only unquestionable authority. The apostle Paul told Timothy, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). In line with this apostolic witness, we affirm that the original manuscripts of the Bible are the inspired Word of God, without error. They stand as the final judge of truth in all areas of life. We have but one unquestionable rule of faith and life — the Scriptures.

Students at RTS find our belief in Sola Scriptura put into action. Every subject in our curriculum is oriented towards rightly examining and applying Scripture to the modern world. Students are taught to take every thought — theological, philosophical, historical, scientific, artistic, etc. — captive and make it obedient to Christ under the guidance of Scripture (II Cor. 10:4). You will never find our professors questioning the absolute authority of the Bible. Instead, we face the challenges of living for Christ by submitting ourselves absolutely to the Old and New Testaments as our ultimate authority.

Sola Gratia (Grace Alone) declares the Reformers' belief that the entirety of salvation is God's gracious gift through Christ. The Reformers encountered the false teaching that human beings could contribute to their own salvation. Believers were taught that they had to add their own merit to the work of Christ in order to receive eternal life. In response to this view, the Reformers insisted that salvation is by grace alone. As the Scripture teaches, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God- not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). We are without any hope in ourselves; redemption is a gift freely given by God through grace alone.

In our day, we need to hear this message of grace as never before. Many seminaries today teach that redemption is a mixture of divine help and human effort. Some schools teach their students a social gospel; deeds of kindness and charity will bring us salvation. Others teach that God's gracious favor is found through a system of legalism: do this... don't do that. In one way or another, good moral living becomes a way for us to earn God's grace and contribute to our own salvation.

RTS is committed to resisting any idea that diminishes the wonder of God's grace in salvation. The apostle Paul tells us that the eternal promises of God belong to those who "put no hope in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3). Hence, we are committed to keeping the Bible's message of grace in the classroom. We will not turn away from complete reliance on God in order to put hope in human strength. We look to Christ and Christ alone to overcome the ravages of sin in our lives and in the world.

At RTS, we also teach our students the importance of letting grace saturate our community. We work hard to have a caring, friendly atmosphere that reflects the mercy of God. There isn't one of us who is not in need of a lot of patience and mercy — both human and divine. God stooped low, really low, to scoop us up. He went to immeasurable lengths to give and forgive. How then can we not respond with grace toward the others in our seminary community? Indeed, freely we have received; freely we must give (Matt. 10:8).

At RTS, we teach that biblical obedience comes as a response to God's grace, not as a prerequisite for receiving it. We are to be motivated by love for God and gratitude for all He has done. We have no greater honor than to submit ourselves fully to the commands of a good God and let Him conform us to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). At the same time, we avoid all forms of legalism that insist on life habits which go beyond the teachings of Scripture. Instead, we promote Christian liberty and affirm the dignity of the believer's conscience in applying the incontrovertible truths of Scripture. Here again, RTS stands with the Reformers and relentlessly affirms that we are saved by grace alone.

Sola Fide (Faith Alone) teaches that justification before God is a one-time event that takes place through faith alone. The early Reformers protested against a church that believed the people's eternal standing before God varied moment by moment. No one could be confident of eternal salvation. Doing good gained the favor of God; doing evil earned His anger. In response, the Protestants reaffirmed the biblical perspective: "to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith

is credited as righteousness" (Rom. 4:5). In assuring believers of their unchangeable status with God, Paul goes on to say, "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us" (Rom. 8: 33-34). Everyone who trusts in Christ by faith for salvation receives immediate and full forgiveness of all their sins. God's declaration of righteousness is the complete and final verdict for all who have genuine faith in the Savior.

At RTS, we believe that everyone preparing for church leadership needs to stand firmly on belief in justification by faith alone. All around us people believe their eternal destinies hang in the balance of each day's activities. At RTS, however, we serve Christ out of the confidence that God has forgiven us of our sins, and credited to our account the righteousness of Christ. When men and women place their faith in Christ, they are set free to serve God with a bold assurance, not out of fear and dread. This confidence in our justification by faith alone then equips us to bring the Gospel of Christ to our lost and dying world.

The administration, faculty, and students of RTS admire the early Protestant Reformers for what they did; we stand with them as heralds of the Reformed faith. They had the wisdom and courage to formulate biblical truth amid much opposition. Alongside their powerful convictions, however, they also had the humility to state repeatedly, "The Reformed Church is always reforming." Like the Reformers, we at RTS face the challenges of our day with conviction and humility. We must always look for new ways to apply the timeless truths of Scripture to our own generation. With an innovative and pioneering spirit we must engage the world of the twenty-first century just as the Reformers engaged the world in the sixteenth century. We believe the best way to prepare church leaders today is to help them sink their own roots into the great truths of the Protestant Reformation.

OUR REFORMED THEOLOGY

We also call ourselves Reformed because we affirm the theology that grew out of the Reformation. The contours of this body of doctrine are conveniently outlined in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, as well as in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms.

RTS is firmly committed to Reformed Theology. Every year our faculty members affirm their agreement with the doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. This summary of biblical teachings provides a doctrinal orientation for all of our classes.

Reformed Theology includes many items affirmed by all evangelicals. Nevertheless, we also have some distinctive doctrinal emphases. For instance, at the heart of Reformed Theology is belief in God's sovereignty and human dependence. Put simply, we believe the Scriptures teach that God is in complete and absolute control of His creation. We depend on Him for all we have and are. These central beliefs are especially important in Reformed outlooks on the plan of salvation.

In the first place, Reformed Theology stresses that God sovereignly accomplished salvation for His people through a single Covenant of Grace extending from one end of the Bible to the other. This covenant relationship between God and His redeemed people unfolded in many stages throughout biblical history, but these various stages are aspects of one unified Covenant in Christ. Believers before Christ's incarnation looked ahead to salvation coming in Christ. New Testament believers look back at the redemption completed in Christ's death and resurrection. This Covenant of Grace in Christ has always been the only divinely ordained plan for salvation from sin.

In the second place, God also displays His sovereignty and our utter dependence as He applies the Covenant of Grace to individual believers. It often helps to summarize this aspect of biblical teaching in "The Five Points of Reformed Theology:"

The Five Points

1. Total Depravity: We stress the pervasive corruption of sin. Sin reaches every aspect of human personality and leaves no nook or cranny untainted. The prophet Jeremiah writes, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9). For this reason, all people are spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1) and unable, apart from the inward stirrings of the Holy Spirit, to respond in faith to the offer of the Gospel. We must depend on a sovereign act of God to break the grip of sin.

2. Unconditional Election: We believe that the eternal, unconditional love of God for us is the ultimate basis of our salvation. Believers do not establish their own redemption; they utterly depend on God's sovereign, everlasting love in Christ as the ground of their salvation. As Paul wrote, "It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy" (Rom. 9:16).

3. Particular Redemption: We emphasize that Christ's atoning death did not simply make salvation possible. Rather, His sacrifice on the cross completely accomplished the salvation of believers. Christ died for "His sheep" (John 10: 11, 15), "His Church" (Acts 20:28), and "His People" (Matt. 1: 21) to give them eternal life. God sovereignly ordained Christ's death as the full payment for our sins. Thus, it fully satisfied the judgment of God for those who believe.

4. Irresistible Grace: We recognize that salvation comes to sinful people because the Holy Spirit sovereignly changes their rebellious hearts. He gives them the spiritual ears with which to hear the call of God. The sheep hear the voice of Christ, are known by Him, and follow Him (John 10:27). We depend on His powerful grace to transform us into new creations and to draw us to our Savior.

5. Perseverance of the Saints: We stress that God's power will keep true believers in Christ to the end. While we recognize our responsibility to "work out our salvation" with great seriousness (Phil. 2:12), we also affirm that it is God who is at work within us both "to will and to do His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). Thus, we persevere in faith with the assurance of eternal life because God sovereignly works all things for our good (Rom. 8:28).

The Reformed outlook on God's plan of salvation is the heartbeat of our seminary. We proclaim God's sovereign grace as the only hope for a lost and dying world.

OUR REFORMED HOPE

We also call ourselves Reformed because of our hope for the future. All believers look forward to that great day when Jesus will return in glory. We share this vision with all of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Yet, throughout the centuries the Reformed branch of the church has sought ways to bring the Gospel to all areas of life.

Our Reformed Hope motivates us to expand the Kingdom in two ways. First, RTS prepares men and women to bring the Gospel to all people in every part of the world. Our faculty and administrators regularly involve themselves in a variety of cross-cultural ministries. We encourage our students to

serve every segment of American society. We prepare international students to build up the body of Christ in their homelands. Moreover, we challenge our students to consider the call to foreign missions. We are told that Christ purchased people for God "from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). Therefore, the proclamation of the Gospel to all people is one of the chief aims of our seminary.

Second, our Reformed Hope looks beyond preaching and the building of the church. We believe that the Lordship of Christ extends to all areas of life. Christ is Lord not only of the church; He is supreme over the family, the arts and sciences, and human society at large. For this reason, we do not withdraw from the world. Rather, we prepare our students to bring the Word of God to bear on every dimension of human culture. As the Gospel spreads, believers are to transform their cultures to the honor and glory of God. We are the bearers of God's image. We are to fill the earth, every aspect of the earth, with the knowledge of God our creator and redeemer, and thus fulfill the mandate given to Adam and Eve so long ago (Gen. 1:27-28).

Lots of people wonder why we call ourselves RTS. "What is Reformed about RTS?" they ask. We have touched on the basic commitments that underline this name. Now we hope you will learn more about our Reformed Roots, Theology, and Hope. They have much to offer to all Christians as they prepare to serve Christ and His church.

Pratt, Richard L. "What is Reformed about Reformed Theological Seminary?." Reformed Theological Seminary . RTS, n.d. Web. 27 Sept. 2013. <http://www.rts.edu/Site/Resources/Booklets/What_is_Reformed.pdf>.

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THE MISSIONAL CHURCH

by Tim Keller

The rapid decline of Christendom since the end of WWII has instituted an even greater need for "missional" churches to engage the surrounding community and retell the culture's stories through the context of the gospel.

THE NEED FOR A MISSIONAL CHURCH

In the West for nearly a thousand years, the relationship of European Christian churches to the broader culture was a relationship known as "Christendom." The institutions of society "Christianized" people and stigmatized non-Christian belief and behavior. Though people were Christianized by the culture, they were not necessarily regenerated or converted with the gospel. The church's job was then to challenge persons into a vital, living relation with Christ.

There were great advantages and yet great disadvantages to Christendom. The advantage was a common language for public moral discourse with which society could discuss what was "good." The disadvantage was that Christian morality without gospel-changed hearts often led to cruelty and hypocrisy. Think of how the small town in Christendom treated the unwed mother, for example. Also, under Christendom the church often was silent against the ruling classes' abuses of the weak. For these reasons and others, the church in Europe and North America has been losing its privileged place as the arbiter of public morality since at least the mid-nineteenth century. The decline of Christendom has accelerated greatly since the end of World War II.

British missionary Lesslie Newbigin went to India around 1950. There he was involved with a church in a very non-Christian culture. When he returned to England some thirty years later, he discovered that the Western church now found itself in a non-Christian society as well, but it had not adapted to its new situation. Though public institutions and the popular culture of Europe and North America no longer Christianized people, the church still ran its ministries assuming that a stream of Christianized, traditional/moral people would simply show up at worship services. Some churches certainly carried out evangelism as one ministry among many, but the church in the West had not become completely missional—adapting and reformulating absolutely everything it did in worship, discipleship, community, and service so as to be engaged with the non-Christian society around it. It had not developed a missiology of Western culture, the way it had done with other nonbelieving cultures.

One of the reasons much of the evangelical church in the United States has not experienced the same precipitous decline as the Protestant churches of Europe and Canada is because in the United States there is still a heartland with remnants of the old Christendom society. There the informal public culture, though not the formal public institutions, still stigmatizes non-Christian beliefs and behavior. There is a "fundamental schism in American cultural, political, and economic life. There's the quicker-growing, economically vibrant . . . morally relativist, urban-oriented, culturally adventuresome, sexually polymorphous, and ethnically diverse nation. . . .

And there's the small-town, nuclear-family, religiously oriented, white-centric other America, [with] . . . its diminishing cultural and economic force. . . . [T]wo countries."[1] In conservative regions, it is still ossible to see people professing faith and the church growing without becoming missional. Most traditional evangelical churches can win to Christ only people who are temperamentally traditional and conservative. As Wolff notes, however, this is a shrinking market, and eventually evangelical churches

1. Michael Wolff, "The Party Line," New York (February 26, 2001): 19.

ensconced in the declining, remaining enclaves of Christendom will have to learn how to become missional. If they do not, they will decline or die. We don't simply need evangelistic churches; rather, we need missional churches.

THE PRACTICES OF A MISSIONAL CHURCH

SPEAK IN THE VERNACULAR

In Christendom there is little difference between the language inside and outside of the church; technical biblical terms are well known inside and outside church life. Documents of the early U.S. Congress, for example, are riddled with allusions to and references from the Bible. In a missional church, however, these terms must be explained.

The missional church:

- avoids "tribal" language, stylized prayer language, unnecessarily pious evangelical jargon, and archaic language that seeks to set a spiritual tone.
- avoids "we-they" language, disdainful jokes that mock people of different politics and beliefs, and dismissive, disrespectful comments about those who differ with us.
- avoids sentimental, pompous, "inspirational" talk.
- avoids talking as if nonbelieving people were not present. If you speak and discourse as if your whole neighborhood were present (and not just scattered Christians), eventually more and more of your neighbors will find their way in or be invited.

Unless all of the above is the outflow of a truly humble-bold, gospel-changed heart, it is all just marketing and spin.

ENTER AND RETELL THE *CULTURE'S* STORIES WITH THE GOSPEL

In Christendom it is possible to simply exhort Christianized people to do what they know they should. There is little or no real engagement, listening, or persuasion. Often, along with exhortation there is a heavy reliance on guilt to motivate behavior change. In a missional church, the preaching and communication always assume the presence of skeptical people and consequently engage their stories.

- To *enter the culture's stories* means to show sympathy toward and deep acquaintance with the literature, music, theater, and other arts expressing the existing culture's hopes, dreams, heroic narratives, and fears.

- To *retell the culture's stories* is to show how only in Christ can we have freedom without slavery, and embrace of the other without injustice. The older culture's story called on people to be a good father/mother, son/daughter, and to live a decent, merciful, good life. Now the culture's story calls people (a) to be free and self-created and authentic (note the theme of freedom from oppression); and (b) to make the world safe for everyone else to be the same (theme of inclusion of the "other"; justice).

THEOLOGICALLY TRAIN LAYPEOPLE FOR PUBLIC LIFE AND VOCATION

In Christendom you can afford to train people solely in prayer, Bible study, and evangelism—private world skills—because they are not facing radically non-Christian values in their public life. In a missional church, the laity needs theological education to "think Christianly" about everything and to work with Christian distinctiveness. They need to know three things: (a) which cultural practices manifest common grace and are to be embraced, (b) which practices are antithetical to the gospel and must be rejected, and (c) which practices can be adapted/revised.

- In a missional situation, the renewing and transformation of the culture through the work of laypeople with distinctively Christian vocations must be lifted up as real kingdom work and ministry, along with the traditional ministry of the Word.

- Christians will have to use the gospel to demonstrate true, biblical love and tolerance in the public square toward those with whom we deeply differ. This tolerance should equal or exceed that which groups with opposing views show toward Christians. The charge of intolerance is perhaps the main "defeater" of the gospel in the non-Christian West.

CREATE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY THAT IS COUNTERCULTURAL AND COUNTERINTUITIVE

In Christendom, "fellowship" is basically just a set of nurturing relationships, support, and accountability. In a missional church, however, Christian community must go beyond that to embody a counterculture, showing the world how radically different a Christian society is with regard to sex, money, and power.

- *In sex.* We avoid both the secular society's idolization of sex and traditional society's fear of sex. We also exhibit love rather than hostility or fear toward those whose sexual life-patterns are different from ours.

- *In money.* We promote a radically generous commitment of time, money, relationships, and living space to social justice and the needs of the poor, the immigrant, and the economically and physically weak.

- *In power.* We are committed to power sharing and relationship building among races and classes that are alienated outside of the body of Christ. A missional church must be deeply and practically committed to deeds of compassion and social justice and deeply and practically committed to evangelism and conversion.

PRACTICE CHRISTIAN UNITY AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

In Christendom, when "everyone was a Christian," it was perhaps necessary for a church to define itself over against other churches—that is, to gain an identity you had to say, "We are not like that church over there or those Christians over here." Today, however, it is much more illuminating and helpful for a church to define itself over against "the world"—the values of the non-Christian culture.

- It is very important that we do not spend our time bashing and criticizing other kinds of churches. That criticalness simply plays into the common "defeater" that Christians are all intolerant.

- While we have to align ourselves in denominations that share many of our distinctives, at the local level we should cooperate with, reach out to, and support the other congregations and churches in our area. This will raise many thorny issues, of course, but our bias should be in the direction of cooperation.

A CASE STUDY

This concept of the missional church goes beyond any program; the practices described here have to be present in every area of the church.

For example, what makes a small group missional? A missional small group is not necessarily one that is doing some kind of specific evangelism program (though that is to be encouraged). Rather, (1) if its members love and talk positively about the city/neighborhood, (2) if they speak in language

that is not filled with pious tribal or technical terms and phrases, nor with disdainful and embattled verbiage, (3) if in their Bible study they apply the gospel to the core concerns and stories of the people of the culture, (4) if they are obviously interested in and engaged with the literature, art and thought of the surrounding culture and can discuss it both appreciatively and critically, (5) if they exhibit deep concern for the poor, generosity with their money, purity and respect with regard to the opposite sex, and humility toward people of other races and cultures, and (6) if they do not bash other Christians and churches—then seekers and nonbelieving people will be invited and will come and stay as they explore spiritual issues.

LEADERSHIP AND CHURCH SIZE DYNAMICS

by Tim Keller

One of the most common reasons for pastoral leadership mistakes is blindness to the significance of church size. Size has an enormous impact on how a church functions. There is a “size culture” that profoundly affects how decisions are made, how relationships flow, how effectiveness is evaluated, and what ministers, staff, and lay leaders do.

We tend to think of the chief differences between churches mainly in denominational or theological erms, but that underestimates the impact of size on how a church operates. The difference between how churches of 100 and 1,000 function may be much greater than the difference between a Presbyterian and a Baptist church of the same size. The staff person who goes from a church of 400 to a church of 2,000 is in many ways making a far greater change than if he or she moved from one denomination to another.

A large church is not simply a bigger version of a small church. The difference in communication, community formation, and decision-making processes are so great that the leadership skills required in each are of almost completely different orders.

SIZE CULTURES

Every church has a culture that goes with its size and which must be accepted. Most people tend to prefer a certain size culture, and unfortunately, many give their favorite size culture a moral status and treat other size categories as spiritually and morally inferior. They may insist that the only biblical way to do church is to practice a certain size culture despite the fact that the congregation they attend is much too big or too small to fit that culture.

For example, if some members of a church of 2,000 feel they should be able to get the senior pastor ersonally on the phone without much difficulty, they are insisting on getting a kind of pastoral care that a church of under 200 provides. Of course the pastor would soon be overwhelmed. Yet the members may insist that if he can’t be reached he is failing his biblical duty to be their shepherd.

Another example: the new senior pastor of a church of 1,500 may insist that virtually all decisions be made by consensus among the whole board and staff. Soon the board is meeting every week for six hours each time! Still the pastor may insist that for staff members to be making their own decisions would mean they are acting unaccountably or failing to build community. To impose a size-culture practice on a church that does not have that size will wreak havoc on it and eventually force the church back into the size with which the practices are compatible.

A further example: New members who have just joined a smaller church after years of attending a much larger one may begin complaining about the lack of professional quality in the church’s ministries and insisting that this shows a lack of spiritual excellence. The real problem, however, is that in the smaller church volunteers do things that in the larger church are done by full-time staff. Similarly, new members of the smaller church might complain that the pastor’s sermons are not as polished and well researched as they had come to expect in the larger church. While a large-church pastor with multiple staff can afford to put twenty hours a week into sermon preparation, however, the solo pastor of a smaller church can devote less than half of that time each week.

This means a wise pastor may have to sympathetically confront people who are just not able to handle the church's size culture—just like many people cannot adapt to life in geographic cultures different from the one they were used to. Some people are organizationally suspicious, often for valid reasons from their experience. Others can't handle not having the preacher as their pastor. We must suggest to them they are asking for the impossible in a church that size. We must not imply that it would be immaturity on their part to seek a different church, though we should not actively encourage anyone to leave, either.

HEALTHY RESISTANCE

Every church has aspects of its natural size culture that must be resisted.

Larger churches have a great deal of difficulty keeping track of members who drop out or fall away from the faith. This should never be accepted as inevitable. Rather, the large church must continually struggle to improve pastoral care and discipleship.

Out of necessity, the large church must use organizational techniques from the business world, but the danger is that ministry may become too results-oriented and focused on quantifiable outcomes (attendance, membership, giving) rather than the goals of holiness and character growth. Again, this tendency should not be accepted as inevitable; rather, new strategies for focusing on love and virtue must always be generated.

The smaller church by its nature gives immature, outspoken, opinionated, and broken members a significant degree of power over the whole body. Since everyone knows everyone else, when members of a family or small group express strong opposition to the direction set by the pastor and leaders, their misery can hold the whole congregation hostage. If they threaten to leave, the majority of people will urge the leaders to desist in their project. It is extremely difficult to get complete consensus about programs and direction in a group of 50–150 people, especially in today's diverse, fragmented society, and yet smaller churches have an unwritten rule that for any new initiative to be implemented nearly everyone must be happy with it. Leaders of small churches must be brave enough to lead and to confront immature members, in spite of the unpleasantness involved.

There is no "best size" for a church. Each size presents great difficulties and also many opportunities for ministry that churches of other sizes cannot undertake (at least not as well). Only together can churches of all sizes be all that Christ wants the church to be.

PRINCIPLES OF SIZE DYNAMICS

Reading books on church size can be confusing, as everyone breaks down the size categories somewhat differently. This is because there are many variables in a church's culture and history that determine exactly when a congregation gets to a new size barrier. For example, everyone knows that at some point a church becomes too large for one pastor to handle. People begin to complain that they are not getting adequate pastoral care. The time has come to add staff. But when does that happen? In some communities it may happen when attendance arises to 120, while in others it does not happen until the church has nearly 300 in regular attendance. It depends a great deal on expectations, the mobility of the city's population, how fast the church has grown, and so on. Despite the variables, the point at which a second pastoral staff member must be added is usually called "the 200 barrier." That is a good average figure, but keep in mind that your own church might reach that threshold at some different attendance figure.

Here are the general trends or changes that come as a church grows larger.

INCREASING COMPLEXITY

The larger the church, the less its members have in common. There is more diversity in factors such as age, family status, ethnicity, and so on, and thus a church of 400 needs four to five times more programs than a church of 200—not two times more. Larger churches are much more complex than their smaller counterparts. They have multiple services, multiple groups, and multiple tracks, and eventually they really are multiple congregations.

Also, the larger the church, the more staff per capita needs to be added. Often the first ministry staff persons are added for every increase of 150–200 in attendance. A church of 500 may have two or three full-time ministry staff, but eventually ministry staff may need to be added for every 75–100 new persons. Thus a church of 2,000 may have twenty-five staff.

SHIFTING LAY-STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

On the one hand, the larger the church the more decision making falls to the staff rather than to the whole membership or even the lay leaders. The elders or board must increasingly deal with only top-level, big-picture issues. This means the larger the church, the more decision making is *pushed up* toward the staff and away from the congregation and lay leaders. Needless to say, many laypeople feel extremely uncomfortable with this.

On the other hand, the larger the church, the more the basic pastoral ministry such as hospital visits, discipling, oversight of Christian growth, and counseling is done by lay leaders rather than by the professional ministers.

Generally, in small churches policy is decided by many and ministry is done by a few, while in the large church ministry is done by many and policy is decided by a few.

INCREASING INTENTIONALITY

The larger the church, the more systematic and deliberate the assimilation of newcomers needs to be. As a church grows, newcomers are not visible to the congregation's members. Thus new people are not spontaneously and informally welcomed and invited in. Pathways for assimilation must be identified or established by asking questions such as these:

- How will newcomers get here?
- How will they be identified by the church?
- Where will unbelievers learn Christianity's relevance, content, and credibility?
- Who will move them along the path?
- Where will believers get plugged in?
- Who will help them?

The larger the church, the harder it is to recruit volunteers and thus a more well-organized volunteer recruitment process is required. Why is this so? First, the larger the church, the more likely it is that someone you don't know well will try to recruit you. It is much easier to say no to someone you do not know than to someone you know well. Second, it is easier to feel less personally responsible for the ministries of a large church: "They have lots of people here—they don't need me." Therefore, the larger the church, the more well-organized and formal the recruitment of volunteers must be.

INCREASING REDUNDANCY OF COMMUNICATION
The larger the church, the better communication has to be. Without multiple forms and repeated messages, people will feel left out and complain, "I wasn't told about it." You know you've crossed into a higher size category when such complaints become constant. Informal communication networks (pulpit announcements, newsletter notices, and word of mouth) are insufficient to reach everyone. More lead time is necessary to communicate well.

INCREASING QUALITY OF PRODUCTION
The larger the church, the more planning and organization must go into events. A higher quality of production in general is expected in a larger church and events cannot simply be thrown together. Spontaneous, last-minute events do not work.

The larger the church, the higher its aesthetic bar must be. In smaller churches the worship experience is rooted mainly in horizontal relationships among those who attend. Musical offerings from singers who are untrained and not especially talented are nonetheless appreciated because "we all know them" and they are members of the fellowship. But the larger the church, the more worship is based on the vertical relationship— on a sense of transcendence. If an outsider comes in who doesn't know the musicians, then a mediocre quality of production will distract them from worship. They don't have a relationship with the musicians to offset the lack of giftedness. So the larger the church, the more the music becomes an inclusion factor.

INCREASING OPENNESS TO CHANGE
The larger the church, the more it is subject to frequent and sudden change. Why?

First, smaller churches tend to have little turnover: individual members feel powerful and necessary and so they stay put.

Second, the larger the church, the more power for decision making moves away from the whole congregation to the leaders and staff. Too much is going on for the congregation or the board or eventually even the staff to make all the decisions as a group. As decision-making power comes into the hands of individual staff or volunteer leaders, change happens more quickly. Decisions can be made expeditiously without everyone signing on.

Further, as we saw above, the larger the church, the more complex it is and therefore the more schedules, events, and programs there are to change.

LOSING MEMBERS BECAUSE OF CHANGES
The larger the church, the more it loses members because of changes. Why? Smaller churches seek at all costs to avoid losing members. As a result, certain individuals and small groups often come to exercise power disproportionate to their numbers. If a change were made, someone invariably would experience it as a loss, and since the smaller church has a great fear of conflict, it usually will not institute a change that might result in lost members. Thus smaller churches tend to have a more stable membership than large churches do.

In larger churches small groups and individual members have far less ability to exert power or resist changes they dislike. And (as noted previously) since larger churches undergo constant change, they regularly lose members because "It's too big now" or "I can't see the pastor anymore" or "We don't pray spontaneously any more in church." Leaders of churches that grow large are more willing to lose

members who disagree with procedures or the philosophy of ministry.

SHIFTING ROLE OF THE MINISTERS

The larger the church, the less available the main preacher is to do pastoral work. In smaller churches the pastor is available at all times, for most occasions and needs, to any member or unchurched person. In the large church there are sometimes more lay ministers, staff, and leaders than the small church has people! So the large church's pastors must recognize their limits and spend more time with staff and lay shepherds and in prayer and meditation.

The larger the church, the more important the minister's leadership abilities are. Preaching and pastoring are sufficient skills for pastors in smaller churches, but as a church grows other leadership skills become critical. In a large church not only administrative skills but also vision casting and strategy design are crucial gifts in the pastoral team.

The larger the church, the more the ministry staff members must move from being generalists to being specialists. Everyone from the senior pastor on down must focus on certain ministry areas and concentrate on two or three main tasks. The larger the church, the more the senior pastor must specialize in preaching, vision keeping and vision casting, and identifying problems before they become disasters.

Finally, the larger the church, the more important it is for ministers, especially the senior minister, to stay put for a long time. As noted above, smaller churches change less rapidly and have less turnover. With this innate stability, a smaller church can absorb a change of minister every few years if necessary. But the larger the church, the more the staff in general and the senior pastor in particular are the main sources of continuity and stability. Rapid turnover of staff is highly detrimental to a large church.

STRUCTURING SMALLER

The larger the church, the smaller the basic pastoral span of care.

In smaller churches, classes and groups can be larger because virtually everyone in the church is cared for directly by full-time trained ministry staff, each of whom can care for 50–200 people. In larger churches, however, the internal groupings need to be smaller, because people are cared for by lay shepherds, each of whom can care for 10–20 people if given proper supervision and support. Thus in a larger church, the more small groups you have per 100 people in attendance, the better cared for people are and the faster the church grows.

EMPHASIS ON VISION AND STRENGTHS

The larger the church, the more it tends to concentrate on doing fewer things well. Smaller churches are generalists and feel the need to do everything. This comes from the power of the individual in a small church. If any member wants the church to address some issue, then the church makes an effort in order to please him or her. The larger church, however, identifies and concentrates on approximately three or four major things and works to do them extremely well, despite calls for new emphases.

Further, the larger the church, the more a distinctive vision becomes important to its members. The reason for being in a smaller church is relationships. The reason for putting up with all the changes and difficulties of a larger church is to get mission done. People join a larger church because of the

vision—so the particular mission needs to be clear.

The larger the church, the more it develops its own mission outreach rather than supporting already existing programs. Smaller churches tend to support denominational mission causes and contribute to existing para-church ministries. Leaders and members of larger churches feel more personally accountable to God for the kingdom mandate and seek to either start their own mission ministries or to form partnerships in which there is more direct accountability of the mission agency to the church.

Consequently, the larger the church, the more its lay leaders need to be screened for agreement on vision and philosophy of ministry, not simply for doctrinal and moral standards. In smaller churches, people are eligible for leadership on the basis of membership tenure and faithfulness. In larger churches, where a distinctive mission and vision are more important, it is important to enlist without apology leaders who share a common philosophy of ministry with the staff and other leaders.

SPECIFIC SIZE CATEGORIES

HOUSE CHURCH: UP TO 40 ATTENDANCE...

SMALL CHURCH: 40–200 ATTENDANCE...

MEDIUM-SIZED CHURCH, 200–450 ATTENDANCE

Character
In smaller churches, each member is acquainted with the entire membership of the church. The primary circle of belonging is the church as a whole. But in the medium-sized church, the primary circle of belonging is usually a specific affinity class or program. Men's and women's ministries, the choir, the couples' class, the evening worship team, the local prison ministry, the meals-on-wheels ministry—all of these are possible circles of belonging that make the church fly. Each of these subgroups is approximately the size of the house church, 10–40 people.

Leadership functions differently in the medium-sized church.

- First, since the medium-sized church has far more complexity, the leaders must represent the various constituencies in the church (e.g., the older people, the young families).
- Second, there is too much work to be handled by a small board. There are now influential leadership teams or committees, such as the missions committee or the music/worship committee, that have significant power.
- Third, because of the two factors above, leaders begin to be chosen less on the basis of length of tenure and strength of personality and more on the basis of skills and giftedness.
- Fourth, the role of the lay officers or board begins to change. In the smaller church, the officers basically oversee the pastor and staff, giving or withholding permission for various proposals. The pastor and staff then do the ministry. In the medium-sized church, the officers begin to do more of the ministry themselves, in partnership with the staff. Volunteer ministry leaders often rise up and become the decision-making leaders. Chairs of influential committees sit on the official board.

As noted above, the senior minister shifts somewhat from being a shepherd toward becoming a "rancher." Rather than doing all of the ministry himself, he becomes a trainer and organizer of laypeople doing ministry. He also must be adept at training, supporting, and supervising ministry and administrative staff. At the medium-sized church level, this requires significant administrative skills.

While in the smaller church change and decisions come from the bottom up through key laypeople, in the medium-sized church change happens through key committees and teams. Ordinarily the official board or session in the medium-sized church is inherently conservative. They feel very responsible and do not want to offend any constituents they believe they represent. Therefore change is usually driven by forward-thinking committees such as the missions committee or the evangelism committee. These can be very effective in persuading the congregation to try new things.

How it grows

As noted earlier, smaller churches grow mainly through pastor-initiated groups, classes, and ministries. The medium-sized church will also grow as it multiplies classes, groups, services, and ministries, but the key to medium-sized growth is improving the quality of the ministries and their effectiveness to meet real needs. The small church can accommodate amateurish quality because the key attraction is its intimacy and family-like warmth. But the medium-sized church's ministries must be different. Classes really must be great learning experiences. Music must meet aesthetic needs. Preaching must inform and inspire.

Crossing the threshold to the next size category

I have said that the small church crosses the 200 barrier through (1) multiplying options, (2) going to multiple staff, (3) shifting decision-making power away from the whole membership, (4) becoming more formal and deliberate in assimilation, and (5) moving the pastor away from shepherding everyone to being more of an organizer/administrator. You can grow beyond 200 without making all of these five changes; in fact, most churches do. Often churches grow past 200 while holding on to one or more of the smaller-church attitudes. For example, if the senior minister is multigifted and energetic, he can take care of the organizational/administrative work and still have time to visit every member of his church. Or perhaps new staff persons are added but the decision-making is still done on a whole-congregation consensus model. But to break 400, you must firmly break the old habits in all five areas. As for the sixth change—moving to new space and facilities—this is usually needed for a medium-sized church to break the growth barrier, but not always.

LARGE CHURCH, 400–800 ATTENDANCE

Character

We have seen that in the small church, the primary circle of belonging is the entire church body. In the medium-sized church, the primary circle is the affinity class or ministry group, which is usually 10–40 in size. However, in the large church the primary circle of belonging becomes the small group fellowship. This is different from the affinity class or ministry in the following ways:

- It is usually smaller—as small as 4 and no bigger than 15.

- It is more of a "miniature church" than is the affinity class or ministry. Affinity classes or ministries are specialty programs, focusing only on learning or worship music or ministry to the poor and so on. The small group fellowship does Bible study, fellowship, worship, and ministry.

Leadership also functions differently in the large church. In the small church, leaders were selected for their tenure; in the medium-sized church, for their skills and maturity. Both of these are still very desirable! But in the large church, these qualities must be combined with a commitment to the church's distinct vision and mission. The larger the church becomes, the more it develops certain key ministries and strengths that it emphasizes, and the common vision is an important reason that members join. So leaders need to be screened for vision as well as other qualifications.

In the small church, the board gave or withheld permission to the pastor(s), who did the ministry. In the medium-sized church, the board is made up of lay leaders and committee chairs who share the ministry work with the pastors and staff. But in the large church, the board must work with the senior minister to set overall vision and goals and then to evaluate the overall ministry. Unlike the small church board, they don't oversee all the staff—they let the senior minister do that. Unlike the medium church board, they may not necessarily be the lay leaders of ministry. Instead they oversee how the church and ministries are doing as a whole.

In the large church, the roles of individual staff members become increasingly specialized, and that also goes for the role of the senior minister. He must concentrate more and more on (a) preaching and (b) vision casting and strategizing. He must let go of many or most administrative tasks; otherwise he becomes a bottleneck.

While in the small church change and decisions happen from the bottom up through powerful lay individuals, and in the medium-sized church they come from the boards and committees, in the large church they happen "top down" from staff and key lay leaders.

How it grows

The small church grows mainly through new groups, classes, and ministries initiated by the pastor, sometimes with the help of an ally. I call this the "backyard approach," since it grows from informal new fellowship circles. The medium-sized church grows mainly through ministries that effectively target "felt needs" of various groups such as youth, seniors, young married couples, and "seekers." I call this the "side-door approach," since it brings in various people groups from your city or neighborhood by addressing their felt needs. The large church, however, grows through a "front-door" approach. The key to its growth is what happens in the worship services—the quality of the preaching, the transcendence of the worship experience, and so on.

Crossing the threshold to the next size category

The same five changes mentioned before need to be taken to the next level.

First change—multiplying options. Up to the "800 barrier," churches can still get away with having a mediocre or poor small-group system. The people may still be getting shepherded mainly through larger programs, affinity classes, and groups that are run by staff people directly. But if God keeps sending you new people, so that you are bumping up against the 800 barrier, you must have the majority of your members and adherents in small groups that are very well run and that do pastoral care, not just Bible study. Multiple services were more important when addressing the 200 or 400 barrier, but small group life is the key to navigating this change.

Second change—multiplying staff. Up to the "800 barrier" churches can still get away with a small staff of generalists, but after the 800 barrier there must be much more specialization. Staff members must be increasingly gifted, and not simply workers, nor even leaders of workers, but leaders of

leaders. They must be fairly mature, independent, and able to attract and supervise others.

Third change—shifting decision-making power. Up to the "800 barrier," decision-making power was becoming more centralized—migrating from the periphery (the whole membership or the whole lay board) to the center (the staff and eventually the senior staff). Now the decision-making power must become more decentralized— migrating out away from the senior staff and pastor to the individual staff and their leadership teams. As noted above, the staff must become increasingly competent and must be given more authority to make decisions in their area without having to run everything through the senior staff or lay board.

Fourth change—becoming more formal and deliberate in assimilation. Assimilation, discipline, and incorporation of newcomers must become even more well organized, highly detailed, and supervised.

Fifth change—adapting the senior pastor's role. The pastor becomes even less accessible to do individual shepherding and concentrates even more on preaching, large group teaching, vision casting, and strategizing.

THE VERY LARGE CHURCH...

To read this full article visit http://www.allsaintsaustin.org/files/KellerChurchSize.pdf

PROFILE OF A SHEPHERD-COUNSELOR

by Diane Langberg

Knowing Christ and caring for others have been inextricably woven together for me ever since I can remember. I came to Christ at the age of eleven through the teaching of my parents. It was not long afterward that I began to truly see the needs of others.

CALLED TO CARE

My father was a U.S. Air Force colonel. As I was growing up, I did not need a degree in psychology to see that most of my friends' mothers were alcoholics. They liked to come to my house after school because my mother was sober-and kind. I told my friends about Jesus and, at the age of twelve, began teaching a small group of girls from Scriprure. I remember going home with one of those girls one day on the way to my house. We found her mother still in bed in a filthy nightgown. She was drunk and hanging tightly onto a bottle of something. It gave me a glimpse into the pain and horror of my friend's life, and I wanted to help.

Little did I know where the eyes to see people's hurts and the heartfelt desire to help them would take me, or how like God it is to use the broken lives I saw to bear fruit in the lives of others. Many years have passed since I was twelve, and I still have eyes thar see and a heartfelr desire to help. Those two traits, plus a few degrees and some training, have given me access to many people whose lives are not unlike those of my young friends and their parents. I have witessed a great deal of pain and horror, and, I believe, I have been called by God to tend those whose lives have been so marked.

I have nurtured women who, as little girls, were repeatedly raped by a man called Daddy. I have come alongside men who, as little boys, were repeatedly molested by a woman called Mommy. I have sat with women whose shattered, black-and-blue faces testified to a twisted form of husbanding yet who were confused as to who was responsible. I have sat with parents who had tended dying children and who desperarely needed tending themselves. I have walked with those whose lives were slowly being destroyed by cancer or other diseases. Missionaries who had been raped and robbed or kidnapped and tortured have come for help and healing. Pastors, weary and broken by divisive and persecuting churches, have needed pastoring themselves.

And there has been another kind of tending, one that I never anticipared when I first began counseling others. I tend not only the women whose faces are black and blue, but also those who batter them. I care for missionaries who leave the United Stares to proclaim the gospel, but who have to come home because they molested those they went to help. I walk with pastors who were called to shepherd, but who ended up feeding on their sheep. I care for those whose marriages are ravaged because they cannot get their faces out of pornography. And so I find myself tending those who are damaged by others as well as those who do the damaging. Sometimes, of course, these people are one and the same.

All of us who help others are shepherds. We shepherd in various arenas. Many of us do so as pastors and therapists; some as teachers, managers, writers, and parents. I did not think of myself as a shepherd so many years ago. Now, however, I realize that this is what I am. Also, having seen the damage done by some unfit shepherds, I have realized that competent Christian counseling--shepherding--is a serious and awesome task.

UNFIT SHEPHERDS

It is far too easy to be an unfit shepherd.

One of the things I do during the course of a week is supervise several other therapists. I hear myself again and again trying to impress upon them the significance they have in the lives of their clients and the power they have to help or to harm them. Whenever you as a therapist enter the broken life of another person, you become extremely important. Many people's lives are so destroyed and barren that you are the only significant relationship they have, and so they live from one session to the next. They count the days until their next appointment with you. As you know, some people cannot even make it a week between appointments, so they call or page or write letters or request more frequent sessions.

People come wanting wisdom about their marriages or their parenting. They come confused and in need of truth. They come in bondage to sin and needing freedom. They come unable to discern right from wrong. To walk into a broken life, a life with needs of this magnitude, obviously gives the shepherd significant influence. And such potential for help also means great potential for harm.

Being an unfit shepherd begins when you abuse the power you have in the lives you've been called to care for, using that power for your own benefit instead of for the good of the client or parishioner. We find this negative model in Ezekiel 34, where the shepherds of Israel are described as feeding on their flocks. Those commissioned by God to care for his people instead used his people for their own benefit. They drank the milk of the sheep, wore their wool, and ate their flesh. In other words, they took whatever the sheep had to offer and used it for themselves.

In counseling, the most obvious example of such abuse of power is the use of a client for the therapist's own sexual gratification. Unfortunately, it is also the most common example-and the most damaging to clients. I refer not only to suicide committed by 1% of sexually abused clients, but also to the inflamed trauma, mistrust of others, destroyed marriages, and shattered lives experienced by nearly every client who has been sexually victimized by self-serving shepherds.

We can abuse our position in more subtle ways as well. For instance, it is easy to feed off others emotionally in order to help ourselves feel loved, important, or wise. We may ask questions in order to titillate our curiosity or to hear information about a third party. Anytime we orchestrate a session so as to feed some appetite or need in ourselves, we behave as unfit shepherds.

Another common abuse of power is encouraging clients to look only to us for help and healing. Certainly, the weak need our strength, the foolish need our wisdom, the despairing need our hope, the blind need our sight, and the doubters need our faith. These are good and right things to give. However, such work can also be seductive to the caregiver, for we may begin to think that we alone are able to give such things adequately. Somehow the healthy nurturing that comes from other people—such as the client's spouse, circle of friends, or church community—begins to pale in comparison to our caregiving, and we wrongly help our clients buy into the lie that we alone are what they need. There is a fine line between believing we are important to others and believing we are necessary to them. When we begin to think and teach—even by implication—that we are necessary, we take the place of the One we have been called to honor and follow.

We are never to steal the hearts of others for ourselves. Rather, as Christian counselors, we are commanded to hand our charges over to God. Our clients come to us hungry for love, truth, hope, and

faith. We cannot ultimately fulfill such needs. But we can, by our lives, give them tastes of the One who is using us to draw them to himself We are servants of the Good Shepherd. We are unfit servants if we become so inflated with our own importance that we fail to utilize the gifting of the body of Christ or fail to point our clients away from us and ultimately to the satisfaction that resides in the Good Shepherd.

Perhaps overarching all abuses, we are unfit shepherds at any point that we misrepresent the Good Shepherd. If our compassion leads us to condone sin, if our abhorrence of evil leads to harshness, if we demand justice without mercy, if our appearance of obedience cloaks hidden disobedience-we are unfit. If we abandon or fail to seek after those who have wandered away, if we rule by power rather than by love, if we leave our clients vulnerable to attack because we fail to speak truth to them-we are unfit.

In John 10, Jesus speaks of himself as the Good Shepherd, contrasting himself with those perfect examples of unfit shepherding, the Pharisees. His clear message to those unfit shepherds was "Woe…," a word used primarily as an expression of grief. Anytime you and I hurt, damage, or mislead one of the least of God's sheep, we bring great grief to the heart of our Lord.

THE FIT SHEPHERD

If it is true that those who seek us out are broken, needy, and vulnerable, and if it is true that you and I are called by God to shepherd such people, then we must learn how to shepherd fitly. Furthermore, if it is true that such a task is so serious and awesome because of its potential impact for good or evil in the lives of others, and if it is also true that shepherding selfishly and unfitly grieves the God who has called us, then we had better learn to counsel according to the Master's own heart.

Oswald Chambers wasn't inaccurate when he wrote, "The sheep are many, and the shepherds few, for the fatigue is staggering, the heights are giddy, and the sights are awful" (p. 52). Some job description—but how true it is! Given the challenge, what does it mean to be a fit shepherd? I believe the answer to that question takes us on a journey into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings-and to the Cross.

It is no coincidence that the birth of the Good Shepherd was announced to shepherds. These men were rejected, and they led isolated lives outside the camp. Unable to observe the ritual washings, they were considered unclean. So, on the ourskirts of Bethlehem, they tended flocks of sheep that were set aside for temple sacrifices. These shepherds so identified with their sheep that they entered their lives and took on their filth. They smelled like their sheep. They lived outside the camp with their sheep. They were set apart because they had stepped in the muck and mire of those they tended.

All the aspects ofJesus' good shepherding, and ours as well, are foreshadowed in this scene. Here we see the thread of sacrifice: The shepherds sacrificed in order to tend the sheep, and the sheep were intended for sacrifice. We also see the threads of tending, protecting, and being ever-watchful day and night, for that is what shepherds do. But we have another, unusual thread: the glory of God manifested in the heavens, brought down into the muck and mire.

Thirty years later the Son of God entered the scene again as John the Baptist announced, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29, NKJV). Our threads are all here. Behold the Lamb-the sacrifice, the unblemished One. He takes away the sin of the world. He stepped into the muck and mire of this world and was made so unclean by it that he had to go outside the

camp to die.

If you and I are to learn from the Good Shepherd, we must begin here. We must first behold the Lamb. We need to seek him, to search him out. When John called his followers to behold the Lamb, he also called them to repentance. To truly behold the glory of God in the flesh is to see our own lives more clearly. So, before we can serve our clients, we must be fully aware of the fact that we are sheep ourselves, in need of the sacrificial Lamb of God and his death for our sins.

We dare not move into shepherding others if we fail to deal with our own lives. If we do not learn to behold the Lamb and repent of our sin, we will catch the soul diseases of those with whom we work. If we do not behold and repent, we will feed on the flock we have been called to feed. If we do not behold and repent, we will confuse ourselves with the Lamb and lead others to follow us rather than him. If we do not behold and repent, we will misrepresent the Good Shepherd, and others will believe lies about him, thinking we are representing him accurately.

You and I are fit to tend sheep only to the degree to which we ourselves have learned to follow the Good Shepherd. If Jesus tended us by first becoming a lamb, who are we to do otherwise? All good shepherds are, first and foremost, lambs. The shepherd who is not first a lamb will be arrogant and proud and will damage those he or she has been called to tend.

So we begin by beholding the Lamb of God, asking him to search us out and repenting of anything in our lives that displeases him. As a result, we are empowered to bring his life and influence into every relationship. If we fail to begin here, then we, like the Pharisees, may have the appearance of obedience, but in actuality we will be unfit shepherds in feeding the flock of God.

We must also begin in the same way that the announcement to the shepherds and from John the Baptist began: *Behold the Lamb!* The Lamb of God, the supreme sacrifice, is the world's only hope. Yet we tend to proclaim, "Behold a new theory!" "Behold these new methods!" "Behold our training and credentials!" "Behold this new opportunity!" "Behold our human skills!" Such things may be good and helpful, but they do not bring life. Any time we forget to declare *Behold the Lamb of God,* we lift up that which cannot bring life and healing to those we serve. Any shepherd who subordinates the life, death, and resurrection of the Good Shepherd to his or her own credentials, tools, or skills will fail.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Over the years I have had the privilege of learning many lessons from our Good Shepherd, and as we conclude volume one of Competent Christian Coumeling, I would like to share some of these lessons with you. These are not the lessons from graduate school or internship, though certainly the knowledge and training of those years are essential to our calling. Instead, the lessons of the Good Shepherd can actually infuse our knowledge, training, and experience with the life of Christ for the good of our clients and to the glory of God.

HUMILITY

The first lesson I want to share is underscored in Philippians 2:5-8: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: who, being in very narure God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant. ... He humbled himself and became obedient to death-even death on a cross!"

The Lamb of God identified with and served those who were cursed. I suspect that you are like me in

that you prefer to be with attractive, like-minded people, those with whom you have a natural affinity. When you are in a group you want to be aligned with those who are clean, bright, healthy, and relationally adept. Jesus, on the other hand, identified with those whose personalities or abnormalities isolated them from others. He identified with the demon-possessed, the blind, the diseased, and even the dead. It is not our nature to do this. We see the afflicted and back away. We are repulsed by crime and disease and social ineptness. We have an aversion to the tormented, the odd, or the unacceptable. I remember many years ago when I first began to see those who had been chronically sexually abused as children. I have never been abused. I enjoy what I now know is the phenomenal privilege of having a mind completely free of any memories of any kind of abuse. I never have to worry that such memories might float to the surface or be triggered by certain circumstances, for they simply do not exist. But one of the women I saw in the early years of my counseling work had been repeatedly and sadistically abused by many others. As I began to ease myself down into those memories, I found myself experiencing nightmares and crying in my sleep. I did not like the nightmares and clearly remember wrestling with whether I could go forward in my counseling work: *I don't have memories like this. Why would I want this in my head? I don't want to picture these things. I don't want them disturbing my sleep. I don't have to do this.*

Only the reminder of the Good Shepherd's humble sacrifice could help me resolve that dilemma: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." A while ago another client asked me an astute question: "After all these years, does your head ever get mixed up about where your memories stop and others' memories begin?" Well, after twenty-five years in the counseling profession the answer is yes, sometimes my head gets mixed up. Sometimes I think or feel things that arise from my identification with survivors rather than from my own life experience.

It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that you and I can humble ourselves and identify with those whose nature or experience is contrary to our own. And it is only the Holy Spirit who saves us from being overwhelmed by the secondary or vicarious trauma that has become a significant issue for many therapists. But if we are to follow the example of the Good Shepherd, we must indeed humble ourselves and wade into the muck and mire of our clients' lives in order to help and nurture them, for that is the kind of shepherding Jesus did. He so identified with the objects of his redemptive work that he became the Lamb and bore the punishment for our sin.

CHOOSING LESSER THINGS

The second powerful lesson I have learned is similar to that of humility. It has to do with choosing lesser things.

The Good Shepherd emptied himself of those things that elevated him. He demanded no recognition. He did not complain that Nazareth was too limited a sphere for his great gifts. He did not seek to dominate those under him. When the disciples started to squabble over who would be greatest in God's kingdom, Jesus got down on his hands and knees and washed their dirty feet.

Unfortunately, in recent decades, the Christian community has been infiltrated with the beliefs that bigger is better, that more means more important, and that status, money, and power are worthy of worship. Now I am not foolish enough to say that bigger is always worse or that more is always bad or that status, money, and power are inherently evil. But what I do believe with all my heart is that such things are of this earth and are transient, not worthy of our devotion.

I remember an inner struggle I experienced during the years when my two sons were quite small. Our

sons were born shortly after I finished my doctorate and got my license. I had been in private practice for a short while, and it was clear that the practice was about to take off. However, I distinctly sensed God directing me to devote myself to mothering my young children. (I realize that he does not lead every young mother to do this.) I loved my work, so setting it aside to be a mom was not an easy thing to do. Also, if God had gifted me for counseling work, why would he ask me to lay down that which he had given? Nevertheless I obeyed. I kept the practice open to a minimal degree and sent most of my referrals elsewhere while I played with LEGOs and Matchbox cars.

During those precious years I learned something of what it means to set aside a good thing-something rightfully mine-for the sake of others. God had indeed called me to do some exceptional things, but he had also called me to be exceptional in the ordinary-to be holy in small places, loving with little people, unrecognized, and unapplauded.

It is a lesson I have had to learn again and again, and not just with little people but also with slow, mean, difficult, and resistant people. To follow the Good Shepherd, we must learn that greatness resides not in what we have or what we do. Rather, greatness is the freedom to set aside what we have and what we do in order to love the sheep God has entrusted to us.

RESTRAINT
Restraint is a voluntary limitation of oneself for the benefit of someone else.

The grocery store where I usually shop has a policy of hiring several employees who are intellectually limited. One particular man has been there about ten years; his job is to help people put their groceries in their cars. He is hard of hearing and lacks social skills. The first time I had him put my groceries in my car, he was slow and he threw the bags (eggs and all) into the trunk in disarray. I decided that from then on I would load the groceries myself.

On future shopping trips this man would offer help, and I would politely say, “No, thank you.” One day after I declined his help, he asked, “Are you sure, ma’ am?” There was almost a pleading tone to his voice, and I realized that he was being rejected by one customer after another. I felt the tug of God’s Spirit. I was, of course, in a hurry. It was raining---hard. But the tug came again, so I said yes. I stood in the rain, carefully made a couple of suggestions, and together we put my bags in the car.

When we finished, the man asked, “Did I do a good job?”
“Yes, you did a good job,” I assured him.
He seemed relieved. “Lots of ladies get mad at me because I don’t do so good.”

I drove home weeping, asking God to teach me what that lesson was about. This man suffers. He suffers in ways I have never experienced. He is treated with anger, disregard, annoyance, and frustration. God called me that day to restrain myself---to restrain my quickness, my skill, my independence, my powers---in order to bestow dignity, value, and esteem on one who was suffering. As I pulled into my garage, I sensed God saying to me, *Is that not a picture of my incarnation? Is that not a tiny taste of what I did for you?* God of the universe, a baby. Infinite wisdom, a little boy. Creator of the worlds, a carpenter. Master of the seas, in a boat. Eternal life, dead and buried. And I didn’t want to restrain myself for a retarded man!

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, says to us, “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46). I say that I love Christ, that I am a Christian psychologist---but then I am impatient or

intolerant or frustrated with a darkened, confused, or frightened person. I will not be able to wait for a trauma survivor to articulate the unspeakable unless I learn the lesson of restraint. I will be intolerant of the repeated failings of an addict unless I learn the lesson of restraint. I will throw in the towel with an Axis II personality disorder unless I learn the lesson of restraint. I will refuse to walk through the valley of the shadow of death with someone who is terminally ill unless I have learned the lesson of restraint.

The work of shepherding requires that we limit our words, because people who suffer cannot absorb a barrage of words or understand the language of high intellect. We will have to restrain the number of our syllables, the loudness of our voices, the suddenness of our movements, and the intensity of our motions if we are to provide a safe place for the scared, the suffering, the traumatized, the silenced. Restraint allows us to connect with others, to be a blessing, and to be blessed ourselves. It also means willingly stepping down into the muck and mire of tragedy and suffering so that we may extend help and hope.

Often, when we are faced with the need to restrain some aspect of ourselves or to alter our agenda, we say, "That's just not me." I am not sure where we get the idea that we should do only that which comes naturally or easily. I have a quick mind and a quick mouth. I have a high energy level. They make jokes in the office about my going through the halls on Rollerblades. But my Shepherd is teaching me that I cannot shepherd his suffering sheep simply by doing what comes naturally. That which is immeasurable came to us in a very tiny package. If we would follow him, we too must learn the lesson of restraint in order to bring light and life to his sheep.

LOVING SERVICE

Another key lesson the Shepherd has taught me is that of service. Certainly the things we are trained to do are avenues of service: We counsel, we teach, we supervise, we write, we consult, we pastor. However, I believe that the service to which the Good Shepherd calls us goes far deeper than the skills we have been trained to utilize.

In Matthew 25 Jesus speaks of returning in all his glory and separating the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. When he speaks to the sheep, he describes why he recognizes them as belonging to him: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you carne to visit me" (verses 35-36). Jesus is talking about acts of merciful service to particular kinds of people. I fear we often read such passages and either romanticize them or fail to really consider what our Shepherd is saying to us. Think about it with me.

What is it like to serve someone who is really hungry and thirsty? I do not mean someone who has skipped lunch. I mean someone who is starving. Hungry, thirsty people are in great need. They may be demanding. They do not care aboutyou. They do not think clearly. They want only to have their needs met. They are desperate, clamoring, grabbing.

What is it like to serve strangers? They may make no sense to you. Their ways are foreign. They seem odd. You do not know why they do what they do. You cannot serve strangers effectively until you take the time to understand them. If you do not, it is only too easy to serve them in a manner that is frightening, inappropriate, or offensive to them.

What is it like to serve naked people? Naked people want to hide from you. They feel exposed. They do not want to be seen. To not humiliate them requires great tact and care. They do not want you close. They want you to go away. Their ambivalence is overwhelming. But you cannot cover their nakedness unless you move in close.

What is it like to serve sick people? Sick people focus on their pain. It is all they can think about, and their interest in you extends only to what you can do to help them feel better. Sick people live in small worlds. Sick people talk about what hurts. Sick people are needy and often messy. Sick people require constant care and oversight.

What is it like to serve prisoners? You cannot serve prisoners unless you go to prison. You must enter a place of locked doors and little light. You must enter a place of restricted movement. You must enter a place where you are watched and where trust is rare.

Clearly, Jesus' redemptive work demanded identification at the deepest level with the most shocking varieties of human suffering. After going through this list, Jesus makes the amazing statement that his sheep are those who do all these things for him: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (verse 40). You see, the lesson I have learned about service is not that I am simply called to serve people, but rather that in serving those who suffer, I am in some mysterious way directly serving the One I follow.

At the close of each year, I try to invest some time before God asking him to show me a Scripture to truly learn to live out in the coming year. One year I was led to Colossians 1:24: "Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church." I believe this verse means we are called to be sensitive to the presence of the sufferings of Christ in all sufferers. Every time I encounter grief, I am encountering a grief he bore. Every time I encounter the sufferings of a stranger or a prisoner, I am encountering burdens he endured. The lesson of service means this: You and I live in solemn trust to the affiicted to mediate to them all that is to be obtained through the life and death of Christ. In so doing we serve the Lord Christ.

LEADERSHIP

When Jesus speaks of himself as the Good Shepherd, he says he "calls his own sheep by name and leads them out .... He goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice" (John 10:3-4). In order to be a fit shepherd, I must willingly go where I would take the sheep I tend.

One of my clients shared with me that a psychology professor had told her class that, if they ever decided to go into therapy, they should be very careful whom they chose as mentors. The reason? If they spent any significant amount of time in therapy, the professor explained, they would leave looking to some degree like their therapists. As the shepherd goes, so the sheep go. Only those who are faithful disciples of Jesus will be fit shepherds for the sheep.

Remember, the Good Shepherd himself became a lamb. To lead effectively we must perpetually "behold the Lamb" in our own lives. Take time to consider these questions:

- Do I really think I can lead someone out of a life of deceit if live with ongoing, hidden sin in my own life?

- Do I really think I can lead someone away from bitterness and revenge toward his or her spouse if I harbor such feelings in my own heart?
- Do I really think I can lead someone out of captivity to an addiction if I continue be live enslaved to something in my own life?
- Do I really think I can lead someone with grace and love when I do not deal graciously and lovingly with the people in my world?

Recently, I was working with a woman who had made the commitment to learn how to love what we might call a difficult man. Her husband is fearful, selfish, and controlling. The promise of reward in this marriage is not at all great, but the wife has chosen to learn to love rather than leave. One day while we were talking about what that love might look like, she stopped me in my tracks with a question: "I just want to know one thing before we go on: Do you work to love your husband like this?"

It was a heart-searching question, one I knew was not just from her but also from God. My husband is an easy man to love; the rewards in our nearly three decades of marriage have been great. My circumstances were a piece of cake next to hers. Bur the challenge still stands: If I am going to teach this woman to be Christlike, to love her husband as Christ loves us, then I must be the kind of shepherd who goes before her sheep. I need to love my husband in the same way that I am calling her to learn to love her husband.

The lesson of leadership is that shepherding is not about imparting knowledge or information. Rather, shepherding is about going before someone in order to impart life. And isn't that exactly what the Good Shepherd has done for us? There is absolutely nothing Jesus asks of us that he himself has not exemplified. He who calls us to truth is Truth. He who calls us to love one another loved us unto death. He who calls us to carry the burdens of others was broken by our burdens. He who calls us to enter the muck and mire of others' lives endured our filth. He who calls us to weep with those who weep, wept over us. The Good Shepherd goes before. Those who would lead sheep are called to go before the sheep. That is true leadership.

AS THE MASTER GOES, SO GOES THE SERVANT

I have heard that a shepherd uses his pet lambs to gather lost sheep. These lambs are so fond of being near the shepherd that, when he calls out to them, they instantly follow him, bringing the lost sheep with them. Likewise, our Shepherd asks us to be so attached to him that, no matter where he places us, others will be induced to follow him because we have gone before them and have followed him ourselves. As we draw nearer to our Shepherd, we bring those lost sheep with us.

The redemptive work of Christ demanded that he identify at the deepest level with all the most shocking varieties of human suffering. As the Master was, so must his servants be. He who dealt with the enemy's occupation of the human heart has called us to do the same. As we follow him, we will learn lessons similar to those I have mentioned----and many more. Each of those lessons calls us to behold the Lamb and repent. As we are taught the lesson of restraint, we see the Lamb who is God in the flesh. As we are taught the lesson of humility, we see Eternal Glory setting aside rank and honor. As we are taught the lesson of service, we see the Sovereign Over All washing feet and touching the untouchable. As we are taught the lesson of leadership, we see Jesus going before, being and doing what he calls us to be and do.

To follow the Lamb is to enter into the fellowship of his sufferings. It means that, like him, we will get down in the filth of life in this world. The more we are willing to follow him into the dual mysteries of

iniquity and suffering, the more of his beauty we will see. The threads of sacrifice that we discovered at the entrance of God into time will lead us directly to the throne of God where we will see his glory, not just in the heavens or in the flesh this time, but in its fullness.

Revelation 5:2-14 tells us that we will hear a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” And the answer will be, “See, the Lion .... He is able.” Then we will see a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne. And we will hear the voices of many angels, numbering ten thousand times ten thousand. They will encircle the throne and sing: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” Then you and I who have followed this Lamb will join with them, singing: “To him who sirs on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!”

Amen.

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CREATION, FALL, REDEMPTION – AND YOUR MONEY

by Tim Keller

The Bible shows us the history of the world in four stages: (1) creation by God, (2) fall into sin, (3) redemption through Christ, and (4) final restoration—the new heaven and new earth. But creation, fall, redemption, and restoration are not just discrete stages in time; they are also different aspects of present reality. Put another way, when we look at anything (tangible or intangible) in this world, we know three things about it:

- **First,** it is part of God's good creation, yet,
- **Second,** it is fallen and affected by sin—distorted somehow, broken, falling short of its original purpose. But,
- **Third,** it is being, and can be, redeemed. The purpose of God is to wipe all creation clean of the effects of sin until it is restored to wholeness, beauty, and glory.

This is the basis of the Christian worldview.

If you miss any these three perspectives, you have a distorted view of reality. For example, take anger. Anger is inherently good (see point 1 above). In God, who gets angry, we see anger's original, creational purpose—as assertiveness to protect that which is good. Anger is an aspect of love. The opposite of love is not anger but indifference. Yet sin has distorted anger, and in human beings it is usually a source of great evil and is always dangerous (point 2 above). But the gospel of grace can redeem our anger so that it becomes a source of energy for good (point 3). If, when considering anger, we leave out any of these aspects of a biblical worldview, our beliefs about anger will be out of touch with reality. We will either have too negative a view of anger (repressing and denying it) or too positive a view (encouraging anger as a tool against "oppression," or blackmailing and exploiting others with it).

Likewise, to understand money and possessions properly, we have to do the same kind of worldview analysis.

MONEY AND GOD (CREATION)

God is the Creator, so he owns everything and we humans are only stewards of whatever he has given us. First Chronicles 29:1–18 tells us how David assembled the people of Israel and, through his example of giving from his own wealth, led the leaders and people to give enough to build a temple. In his prayer he says, "Everything in heaven and earth is yours. . . .Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. . . . Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand" (vv. 11–14). From this we learn several important things about money.

First, no matter how much you worked for your wealth, everything you have is a gift from God (cf. Prov 16:33). Even if you have worked very hard for what you have, it was only with the health, talent, abilities, and "luck" (favorable circumstances) God gave you that you were able to achieve what you did. If it was not for God, you could have been born on a mountain in Mongolia in the eleventh century—and then where would you be financially?

Second, God does not give up ownership of his creation when it leaves his hand and comes into yours. The more money you have, the more power you have to arrange and influence what happens in your piece of the world. However, though God gives you power over certain pieces of the world, he does not give you ownership of those pieces. Bill Gates has power over more of the world than you do, and you have more power than many others do, but none of us own any of it.

That leads, third, to a stark conclusion: a lack of generosity is not just stinginess but robbery. Matthew 25, the parable of the talents, very specifically says that we are to invest the money God gives us into God's causes and seek to multiply its effectiveness in the lives of others. In this way we are like investment managers—we are not to use the resources of our "client" in ways that violate his values and purposes. A failure to use the owner's money as he wishes, for his investments, is not being miserly; it is being a thief. If there were a divine Securities and Exchange Commission in the sky, we'd be in trouble—and maybe there is, and maybe we are! Malachi 3:8 makes this clear when God says, "Will [you] rob God? Yet you rob me . . . in tithes and offerings."

Christians therefore must live as stewards, using the power we have over creation through our money for God's causes. We do that controlled by the thought "God's money is in my bank account." We are God's investment managers." We are obliged to give—and in light of the image from Matthew 25, the biblical guideline of the tithe looks pretty good. God prescribed the tithe—a tenth of one's annual income to be given back to him and his causes (ministry, the poor, the needs of one's community). Given that God is the owner of all things and we are stewards, tithing is an incredible deal, by any standards. Imagine being a stockbroker who can keep 90 percent of the dividends of the client! Imagine renting a farm and only giving the owner 10 percent of the proceeds!

PRACTICAL ISSUES

Are Christians obligated to tithe? The tithe—giving away 10 percent of annual income—was an obligation in the Old Testament. In Luke 11:42 Jesus tells religious leaders it is right that they tithe but wrong that they refuse to go beyond the tithe even when love and justice demand it ("Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth . . . but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.") What does this mean? It makes no sense at all to imagine that God would have higher standards for his Old Testament people than he would for his New Testament people, who have far greater privileges. Almost certainly, Christians should consider the tithe the minimum standard for their giving and should always look to go beyond the tithe if they can. It's such a privilege to invest the Master's money in his causes! We should always be seeking to invest as much as possible. In summary, the tithe is not a rigid rule but a guideline and something of a "floor." If you have too many financial obligations to tithe now, then be sure you meet those obligations. Arrange your life so that you can give more in the future. Don't feel too guilty. Be creative, be joyful, and itch to go over the tithe.

MONEY AND SIN (FALL)

Because of sin in our hearts and in the world, money now has an enslaving power. In Mark 10:17–30 we read the famous story of the rich young ruler, who asked,

> *"Good teacher, . . . what must I do to inherit eternal life?"*
>
> *[Jesus replied,] "You know the commandments 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal. . ."*

"Teacher," he declared, "all these have I kept since I was a boy."

Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack...Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, for he had great wealth.

. . . [Jesus commented,] "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! I tell you . . . no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them persecution) and in the age to come, eternal life."

From this we learn that money can exercise great power over us. The Bible talks almost constantly about money and the spiritual dangers attending it. Just look at Luke for a minute. A large number of Luke's parables relate to money matters—the two debtors, the rich fool, the tower builder, the lost coin, the unjust steward, the rich man and Lazarus, and the parable of the pounds. The Pharisees are said to have "loved money" (16:14). John the Baptist warns people against discontent with their income (3:13). Jesus warns people to "watch out" and be on high alert against greed (12:15), against worry about money (12:22), against frantic overwork (12:30), and against eriving a sense of one's worth and identity from one's socioeconomic class achievement (12:15). If money, comfort, and reputation are too important to you, says Jesus, you will not enter the kingdom of God (6:24–26).

The Bible talks about money twenty or thirty times more than it talks about sex. Why? Because money's spiritual power blinds us to itself. When people are committing adultery, they know they are doing it; but hardly anyone who loves money too much knows that they do. People are always confessing sexual sins, but almost no one says, "I'm materialistic" or "I'm greedy." If the Bible continually warns us about the danger of materialism, yet almost no one thinks they are guilty of it, then it means a great number of people are blinded to (and by!) the power of money in their lives. The only responsible thing to do is go on the working hypothesis that we are infected by materialism and must be on the watch for it. If materialism is that insidious and stupefying, it is a lot like alcoholism. Maybe the clearest sign of materialism is this: you aren't willing to even admit the possibility that you are enslaved to greed.

The only way we can be free from the power of money, and be sure we are free (and not self-deluded), is to give money away so much that we lower our living standard. We must see that we live in a smaller or less opulent space, that we take simpler vacations, that we spend less money on clothes and the ike, than we otherwise would. While the theme of "money and creation" leads to the practical principle of giving the tithe, the theme of "money and fall" leads to the practical principle of giving sacrificially, until it simplifies your lifestyle. There is some interesting creative tension between these two biblical standards for giving. On the one hand, there are people making very little money who live close to the edge. If they are to simply put food on the table and a roof over their family's heads, they cannot tithe. Yet in such circumstances giving away 3–5 percent of their income is very sacrificial; it usually means going without things most of us would consider very basic. I have seen working poor families give very sacrificially though they do not tithe. On the other hand, persons making a lot of money would have to give away far more than a tithe before it would begin to cut into the way they live, where they eat, how much they travel, and where they live.

PRACTICAL ISSUES

Does this mean that no Christians should ever live in wealthier neighborhoods? No—if you make $500,000 per year, it is right and important that you live in a neighborhood and move in circles with others who make a similar income. Why? We need Christians in every social class, every neighborhood, every circle. But Christians should always aim for the bottom end of their particular income bracket with regard to how much they spend on themselves.

Is it possible, though, for a Christian to give away too much? Yes. Christians should keep enough (a) that they can live a safe and healthy life, (b) that they don't become a burden to others, and (c) so that they can continue to do good. There are many people who have made or inherited a substantial fund of money. If they gave it all away immediately they might do less good in the long run than if they gave it away slowly, allowing it to continually grow new dividends and earnings.

In summary: if we can go beyond the tithe (a) without hurting our health, (b) without becoming a burden to others, (c) without reneging on our financial obligations, and (d) without undermining our ability to live and minister among those with whom we work, then we should give sacrificially beyond the tithe.

MONEY AND GRACE (REDEMPTION)

Because God is at work in the world to redeem it, your money can become a "currency of grace," a channel for enormous changes in other people's lives. In 2 Corinthians 9:7–15 we read: "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. . . . Now he . . . will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous. . . . And . . . their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"

Here we learn, first, that we can turn our money into a channel of God's grace. Notice that the words *righteousness, riches, grace, giving,* and *gift* are so interchangeable that you cannot tell when Paul is saying that God has given us money or grace and when he's saying that we have passed on money or grace to others. The point is, *our money is ours by grace, and when we give it away generously and joyfully, it comes to other people like God's grace.*

Radical generosity is a profound and undeniable evidence of the power of the gospel. The more Christians give their money to God and others, the more people will believe in and experience the living reality of Jesus Christ. That is true whether you literally give money to a ministry that wins people to Christ or whether you are simply generous to your neighbors and to the poor. Christian giving changes people's lives.

We learn, second, that grace makes Christians want to give. We do not give just out of obligation to God (see "Money and Creation"), nor just to liberate ourselves from the power of money (see "Money and Fall"). In 2 Corinthians 8:8–9 we hear Paul saying, "I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." Paul demands the love that cannot be demanded. He requires the giving that cannot be simply the response to a demand. Christians are those who accept salvation by grace, not works (Eph. 2:8-10). We know we were saved by Jesus' radical generosity on the cross. Ultimately

our giving, then, must be spontaneous—and if it is not, then we have to go back and ask if we know we are saved by grace at all. If you have been given everything freely, then you will be freed to give everything freely. Christians who are in touch with this spiritual reality do not need a command.

PRACTICAL ISSUES

In 2 Corinthians 8–9, Paul does not put pressure directly on the will ("I'm an apostle and I command you to give!!") nor directly on the emotions ("You have so much and these poor people have so little! How can you neglect them?") Rather he goes to the Corinthians' heart with the gospel. He says: If you don't want to give, you don't really understand the gospel of grace. You don't understand who you are, you don't understand what Christ has done. Rather than looking to Jesus, you may be trying to be your own savior by saving enough money to maintain security in an insecure world. Or, again rather than looking to Jesus, you may be relying on people's approval to give you a sense of significance because you are living at a certain economic/material level. In any case, you are failing to remember the generosity of Jesus for you on the cross. Paul says that the only solution is to preach the gospel to your own heart until you want to give away your money. No other way will work. All other methods will produce superficial results. So in order to become a gracious, generous person, don't sit down with a calculator—look to the cross.

CONCLUSION

As a church we must go through this process of examining how we spend our money, examining our motives for not giving more, repenting for and revising the amount of money we spend on ourselves. For if we don't push ourselves through the fear, pain, and even resentment that such examination will at first bring, we cannot experience the greater joy in God, freedom within ourselves, and healing in the city that radical gospel-based generosity can bring.

MEMBERSHIP VOWS

In worship new members will answer the following questions in front of the congregation.

1. Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save in His sovereign mercy?

2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?

3. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?

4. Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?

5. Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to study its purity and peace?