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THE INTEGRATION OF EVANGELISM AND SOCIAL CONCERN
IN THE MINISTRY OF TIMOTHY KELLER

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THE INTEGRATION OF EVANGELISM AND SOCIAL CONCERN
IN THE MINISTRY OF TIMOTHY KELLER

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This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Hyeran, and our children, Heechan and Heejoo.

Without their love and support, this project could have never been completed.

I am more grateful than I can express to be living life with them as a family.

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PREFACE

I am grateful to God for enabling me not only to believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord but also to live my daily life in the power of the gospel. While I wrote this dissertation, I realized how profound the gospel is. It is not merely the entrance of Christianity, but its hub. Every Christian life and ministry must be empowered by the gospel, based on the gospel, and a result of the gospel.

I am grateful to Dr. Timothy Beougher for his supervision, not only in this dissertation, but also throughout the entire course of my doctoral studies. His love for the Lord and passion for sharing the gospel has helped me to become a disciple who makes other disciples for Christ. I am also thankful for the valuable input I have received in this project from Dr. Adam Greenway and Dr. George Martin. All of these men are brilliant scholars and faithful disciples of the Great Commission, and their influence has made this dissertation better in every way.

I am thankful to the congregations of Bloomington Korean United Methodist Church. Because they called me to be a pastor, I am becoming a shepherd who follows the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ. I am also grateful to Rev. Hyung-nak Mah for his life as a shepherd. His love and sacrifice for Shepherd Community Church have aided me to realize what it means to be a pastor or a shepherd who would lay down his life to build a healthy church. I am grateful to Rev. Eundeuk Kim for encouraging me to write my dissertation on Timothy Keller. I am also grateful to Mrs. Marilyn Anderson for her professional editing.

Finally, I am thankful to my family for the indispensable role they played in my reaching this long-held goal. My parents, Changsik An and Haengsook Han, instilled in me a love for learning at an early age, and they encouraged me throughout the course

of my life to seek to be the very best I could be. I am grateful for their love and guidance. I am thankful for our children, Heechan and Heejoo, who have done their duties faithfully as Christians and students when their father had to be away to pursue this calling. I am profoundly grateful to be their father. Most of all, I am thankful for my wife, Hyeran Kim—the one whom I love most beside God. After I married her, I began to be a man of God with her prayer and love. Without her as my wife, I may never have become a man of God.

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Bloomington, Indiana

December 2018

CHAPTER 1
EVANGELISM AND SOCIAL CONCERN

Introduction

Timothy Keller has been called “Manhattan’s leading evangelist,”¹ “a C. S. Lewis for the 21st century,”² and one of “the most prominent evangelical thinkers.”³ Recognizing Keller’s influence on the world, *Fortune* ranked Keller the 41st leader among their 2018 list of the world’s 50 greatest leaders.⁴ He is a professor, an author, and a church planter. In addition, he is the founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church⁵ in New York City.⁶ *Christianity Today* praises this church as “one of Manhattan’s most vital congregations.”⁷ Keller planted this church in 1989 with his wife, Kathy, and their three young sons. Over a period of twenty-five years, RPC has grown to a weekly

¹ Michael Luo, “Preaching the Word and Quoting the Voice,” *The New York Times*, February 26, 2006, accessed March 24, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/26/nyregion/preaching-the-word-and-quoting-the-voice.html>.

² Lisa Miller, “The Smart Shepherd,” *Newsweek*, February 9, 2008, accessed May 17, 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/smart-shepherd-93595>.

³ Nicholas Kristof, “Am I a Christian, Pastor Timothy Keller?,” *The New York Times*, December 23, 2016, accessed March 24, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/23/opinion/sunday/pastor-am-i-a-christian.html>.

⁴ *Fortune*, “The World’s 50 Greatest Leaders,” accessed April 21, 2018, <http://fortune.com/longform/worlds-greatest-leaders-2018/>.

⁵ Redeemer Presbyterian Church will be referred to as RPC.

⁶ New York City will be referred to as NYC.

⁷ Tony Carnes, “New York’s New Hope,” *Christianity Today*, accessed March 24, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/december/15.32.html>.

attendance of over 5,000.⁸ Many members of his congregation are single, under 35 years of age, and professionals, such as bankers, lawyers, or artists.⁹

Keller has had a great influence on NYC as well as on the world in terms of evangelism and church planting. RPC is considered one of the key churches that have contributed to the great growth of Christianity in NYC in the past twenty years.¹⁰ When Redeemer began in 1989, NYC was the least religious city in the U.S., and less than 1 percent of New Yorkers in Manhattan went to a gospel-teaching church. By 2016, 5 percent of center-city New Yorkers attended a gospel-teaching church.¹¹ He is also a chairman of Redeemer City to City, which has helped to plant churches in Africa, Pacific Asia, Europe, Latin America, and North America.¹² Over a period of fifteen years, Keller has helped launch over 423 churches in 56 cities.¹³ The ministry of Redeemer City to City keeps expanding, and a growing number of Christians recognize the importance of reaching, teaching, and serving urban dwellers.

Keller stresses Christians' social responsibility for mercy and justice ministry and for cultural renewal.¹⁴ His emphasis on social concern is well articulated by the

⁸ Timothy J. Keller, "Biography," accessed March 24, 2017, <http://www.timothykeller.com/author/>.

⁹ Kate Bachelder, "God Isn't Dead in Gotham," *The Wall Street Journal*, December 20, 2014, accessed March 24, 2017, http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/print/WSJ_-A013-20141220.pdf.

¹⁰ "Empire State of Change," *Relevant Magazine*, accessed May 10, 2017, <https://relevantmagazine.com/feature/empire-state-of-change/>.

¹¹ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "The Vision," accessed May 10, 2017, <http://rise.redeemer.com/the-vision/>.

¹² Redeemer City to City, "Churches," accessed May 11, 2017, <http://www.redeemercitytocity.com/churches/>.

¹³ Redeemer City to City, "About Redeemer City to City," accessed March 24, 2017, <http://www.redeemercitytocity.com/about/>.

¹⁴ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Redeemer Vision and Values," accessed May 10, 2017, https://www.redeemer.com/learn/vision_and_values/.

following case. In 1998, Timothy and Kathy Keller wrote to *The New York Times* in response to the article “Making New Christians” to clarify that RPC was neither hardline nor fundamental.¹⁵ The title of their writing is “Redeemer Church Rejects the ‘Hard-Line’ Label.” They pointed out that while fundamentalist churches highlight political issues and are culturally biased and hostile to the neighboring culture, RPC does not share these characteristics of Fundamentalism. Instead, RPC concentrates on fundamental Christian doctrines regarding “the character, ministry and work of Jesus,” develops “outward sacrificial service to social needs of our neighborhoods,” and promotes “a highly positive view of NYC with encouragement to live here as good neighbors.”¹⁶ Their assertion makes clear that RPC makes an effort to have a balanced emphasis on an inner personal relationship with God through evangelism as well as on an outward healthy relationship with neighbors through social justice and cultural engagement. Keller and his wife asserted that these qualities make RPC different from 20th-century Fundamentalism or modern mainline Protestantism.¹⁷ Acknowledging Redeemer’s balanced emphasis on evangelism and social concern, *Christianity Today* avowed, “Fifty years from now, if evangelical Christians are widely known for their love of cities, their commitment to mercy and justice, and their love of their neighbors, Tim Keller will be remembered as a pioneer of the new urban Christians.”¹⁸ This statement is in process of being realized, considering his influence on this generation.

¹⁵ Edward Lewine, “Making New Christians,” *The New York Times*, January 25, 1998, accessed May 10, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/01/25/nyregion/making-new-christians.html>.

¹⁶ Timothy J. Keller and Kathy Keller, “Redeemer Church Rejects the ‘Hard-Line’ Label,” *The New York Times*, February 15, 1998, accessed May 10, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/02/15/nyregion/l-redeemer-church-rejects-the-hard-line-label-580457.html>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ *Christianity Today*, “A New Kind of Urban Christian,” accessed March 24, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/may/1.36.html>.

Statement of the Problem

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to understand the integration of evangelism and social concern in Keller's ministry. It will examine if this integration is based on his understanding of the "wholeness" of the gospel. This study seeks to answer several questions regarding this objective:

1. How did Keller's life impact his ministry that stresses the integration of evangelism and social concern?
2. How does Keller understand "the gospel for saving individuals"¹⁹ (God-sin-Christ-faith) and "the gospel for renewing creation"²⁰ (creation-fall-redemption-restoration)?
3. What is Keller's definition of the gospel? What is the relationship between GFI and GFC? Is Keller's view on the gospel a foundation of his integration of evangelism and social responsibility?
4. Why and how does Keller's understanding of the gospel promote personal impact (changed lives) as well as social impact (social justice and cultural engagement)?
5. What is Keller's understanding of the mission of the church in terms of the relationship between evangelism and social concern?
6. What are specific examples of personal conversion and community formation embodied by Keller's understanding of the gospel at RPC
7. What are detailed ministries of social justice, cultural renewal, and church planting shaped by Keller's understanding of the gospel at RPC?

This dissertation attempts to address these issues within the main question guiding this study, "Why and how did Keller integrate evangelism and social concern in the ministry of RPC?"

This dissertation concerning the integration of evangelism and social concern in Keller's ministry is needed because there are few balanced and healthy models regarding this integration. This relationship has been an ongoing debate in Christianity for more than a century.²¹ As a result of industrialization and urbanization in the

¹⁹ The gospel for saving individuals will be referred to as GFI.

²⁰ The gospel for renewing creation will be referred to as GFC.

²¹ See examples of the diversity of Christian understandings of the relationship. Tim Chester, *Good News to the Poor: Social Involvement and the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013); Kevin DeYoung

nineteenth-century, many Christians observed the miserable quality of life in slums and argued for a social gospel.²² One of the proponents of the social gospel was Walter Rauschenbusch, who asked Christians to work for the Kingdom of God by participating in social reforms.²³ A number of Christians focused on social reforms, such as abolition of child labor and eradicating poverty. By 1930, fundamentalists largely avoided any involvement in social action, because they realized that the social gospel movement promoted by liberal theologians had lost its focus on evangelism and the centrality of the cross.²⁴ Machen clarifies the significance and the priority of evangelism over social concern, arguing, “The Christian regards satisfaction with a mere influence of Christian civilization as a hindrance rather than help; his chief business is the saving of souls, and

and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011); Harvie M. Conn, *Evangelism: Doing Justice and Preaching Grace* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1992); Dean E. Flemming, *Recovering the Full Mission of God: A Biblical Perspective on Being, Doing, and Telling* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013); Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); Timothy J. Keller, *Generous Justice: How God’s Grace Makes Us Just* (New York: Penguin, 2012); Timothy J. Keller, *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2015); Christopher R. Little, *Polemic Missiology for the 21st Century: In Memoriam of Roland Allen* (Amazon Digital Service: Kindle, 2013); David O. Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Evangelism versus Social Concern* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1972); Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: MacMillan, 1918); John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975); C. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981). These authors do not represent an exhaustive list, but illustrate the variety of views and broadness of discussion related to evangelism and social concern. Regarding a number of views among Christians, Hesselgrave identifies four general approaches to the debate. The first view is radical liberationism, which means that “the mission is to promote justice in society and establish *Shalom* on the earth” (emphasis original). Then, revisionist holism indicates that “the mission is to minister to society and individuals without dichotomizing between the physical and spiritual or the body and soul/spirit.” Third, restrained holism implies that “the mission is to minister to society and individuals socially and spiritually while giving a certain priority to evangelism” Finally, traditional prioritism means that “the mission is primarily to make disciples of all nations. Other Christian ministries are good but secondary and supportive.” David J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 118-25.

²² Pierre J. Jacobs, “The Social Gospel Movement Revisited: Consequences for the Church,” *HTS Theological Studies* 71, no. 3 (2015): 2.

²³ Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, 146.

²⁴ George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 86-92.

souls are not saved by mere ethical principles of Jesus but by His redemptive work.”²⁵ By 1947, Carl F. H. Henry, an important Evangelical leader, critiqued the fundamentalists’ uncritical retreat from the social relevance of the gospel.²⁶ According to his book, “The Church needs a progressive Fundamentalism with a social message.”²⁷ Evangelicals, while holding to the same key doctrines as fundamentalists, also sought to place emphasis on the social needs of people.²⁸

At the 1974 Lausanne Conference, the Lausanne Covenant clarified the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility and declared that “evangelism and socio-political involvement are part of our Christian duty”²⁹ and that “in the church’s mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary.”³⁰ On the last day of the Lausanne Conference, approximate 200 conference attendees disagreed with the priority of evangelism over social concern and argued that social responsibility carries equal weight with evangelism.³¹ After the 1974 conference, John Stott kept arguing for a dual emphasis on gospel proclamation and social action in Christian missions, but Billy Graham saw evangelism as the primary focus of Christian missions. Stott confronted Graham by saying that he would step down from the committee if Graham’s argument prevailed and demanded that his view on the dual emphasis should be applied to the

²⁵ J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (New York: MacMillan, 1923), 156.

²⁶ Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience*, 16-17.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, xx.

²⁸ Angel Santiago-Vendrell, “Evangelism and Social Responsibility,” *Apuntes* 24, no. 2 (2004): 48.

²⁹ John R. W. Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2012), 29.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

³¹ Joel James and Brian Biedebach, “Regaining Our Focus: A Response to the Social Action Trend in Evangelical Missions,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 25, no. 1 (2014): 32.

organization's ongoing work.³² In 1982, under the chairmanship of Stott, the Lausanne Committee published a report on the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility. This report makes evangelism and social ministry equal partners in the fulfilling of the Great Commission: "They are like the two blades of a pair of scissors or the two wings of a bird. This partnership is clearly seen in the public ministry of Jesus. . . . His words explained his works, and his works dramatized his words. Both were expressions of his compassion for people, and both should be ours."³³

This debate continues into the twenty-first century. In October 2011, Albert Mohler and Jim Wallis debated whether social justice is an essential part of the church's mission. While Mohler claimed that the church's mission is to preach the gospel and that social justice results from sharing the gospel, Wallis asserted that justice is just as important as the gospel and that it is a necessary component alongside the gospel.³⁴ In addition, some Christians insist that the social and economic problems that social activists, such as Rauschenbusch, were worried about in the past are still ongoing today and argue for a new social gospel for this generation.³⁵ Keller's integration of evangelism

³² Trevin Wax, "When John Stott Confronted Billy Graham," *The Gospel Coalition*, accessed May 11, 2017, <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/trevinwax/2013/05/08/when-john-stott-confronted-billy-graham/>.

³³ Lausanne Committee, "Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment," June 25, 1982, accessed May 15, 2017, <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lop/lop-21>.

³⁴ Albert Mohler and Jim Wallis, "Is Social Justice an Essential Part of the Mission of the Church?," Henry Center for Theological Understanding, November 4, 2011, accessed May 15, 2017, <http://henrycenter.tiu.edu/2011/11/media-up-wallis-mohler-debate/>.

³⁵ Elizabeth L. Hinson-Hasty, "Solidarity and Social Gospel: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives," *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 37, no. 2 (2016): 148. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, a former president of Chicago Theological Seminary, calls for a new social gospel in this era, saying,

Here's the stark reality: the gains that were made through the titanic labor struggles of the late 19th and 20th centuries for decent working conditions, the right to organize and form unions and secure living wages are being systematically destroyed in the "post-industrial" age of the American 21st century. We cannot let this happen. (Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, "We Need a New Social Gospel: The Moral Imperative of Collective Bargaining," *OnFaith*, accessed March 17, 2017, <https://www.onfaith.co/onfaith/2011/02/23/we-need-a-new-social-gospel-the-moral-imperative-of-collective-bargaining/4875>)

and social concern in the ministry of Redeemer can be a beneficial model in solving the intense tension flowing from this debate.

Background

When I was a teenager, I was filled with anguish because I repeatedly committed sins after I had believed in Jesus as Lord and Savior. The huge burden of sins made it impossible for me to live in God's love and grace during adolescence. Amidst this challenging situation, I found Romans 8:1-2. I still remember the moment I more fully understood the gospel. Immediately, all of my guilt, self-hatred and depression were healed by the truth of the Bible. I could approach the holy God with confidence that I am a beloved son of God not because of what I have to do, but because of what Jesus Christ has already done on the cross. This truth has enabled me to experience the power of the gospel and to share the gospel with the unconverted who painfully suffer as a result of sin.

In my early twenties, I realized that the gospel had saved me from my serious anguish of sin but seemingly could not rescue the poor from their suffering caused by poverty. At that time, I taught English and math to students in an afterschool program that was supported by a social welfare center. I shared the gospel with them and told a number of Bible stories. However, these efforts did not relieve their difficulties resulting from alcoholic fathers, disabilities, poverty, and so on. They needed not only the gospel that I had experienced but also specific help that alleviated their economic and social problems. During this time, I became convinced that sharing the gospel to the poor was not sufficient for them to be rescued from their difficulties; churches need to do something specific for them.

When I took Evangelistic Ministry: Biblical and Theological Principles led by Timothy Beougher in December 2014, I learned that well-known evangelists and pastors have different understandings of the gospel and conversion that affect their evangelistic strategies. In this seminar, Dennis Kyle Sullivan's presentation on "Gospel and Conversion in Tim Keller" enabled me to comprehend Keller's view of the gospel,

specifically in relation to all of creation. Keller argues that the gospel has to be communicated as salvation from wrath by propitiation and restoration of all things. Since I had never paid attention to the cosmic effects of the gospel, Keller's understanding of the gospel enlightened my own.

In May 2015, I took Contemporary Church Growth led by Adam Greenway. The main focus of this class was on studying church health and revitalization. One of the requirements of this seminar was to analyze and critique Keller's *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City*.³⁶ This assignment gave me an opportunity to focus on reading the book carefully and understanding Keller's gospel-centered ministry. In this seminar, students were required to discuss ten books, and Greenway intentionally put the discussion about Keller's book and Andy Stanley's *Deep & Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend*³⁷ as the last two book discussions. The comparison of *Center Church* and *Deep and Wide* helped me to see differences between them. Since Stanley emphasizes that the church exists for the unchurched, his focus is on creating a church for the unchurched by using even biblically questionable strategies.³⁸ In contrast, Keller believes the church is not only for the unconverted but also for Christians, their jobs, social justice, and a city. Both authors

³⁶ Timothy J. Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

³⁷ Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

³⁸ Stanley overstates his assertion that the church exists for the unchurched. In terms of evangelism based on the Great Commission, the church should strive to help unbelievers in order to draw their attention to the gospel and to help them believe in Jesus. However, an *ekklesia* (church) itself means a gathering of God's people. This implies that the church is made up of people who are born again. In this sense, although unchurched people are welcome to attend the church, they do not belong to the church. Evangelism must be one of the church's missions but is not the ultimate mission. Stanley's overstatement makes it seem like evangelism is the mission of the church. Ibid., 92-93; See Zach Schlegel, review of *Deep & Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend*, by Andy Stanley, *9Marks*, accessed March 29, 2017, <https://www.9marks.org/review/deep-wide-creating-churches-unchurched-people-love-attend/>.

built mega-churches, but I concluded Keller's church is much healthier than Stanley's church in that the gospel affects virtually all spheres of life.

In the following semester, I realized clearly that the gospel is for saving souls as well as for renewing creation when I took a colloquium led by Timothy Beougher. The theme of this colloquium was the gospel message, and one of the requirements of this class was to read ten books written with the term "Gospel" in the title. All ten books helped me to understand the message of the gospel and its implications, but three books, *Explicit Gospel* written by Matt Chandler, *What is the Gospel?* written by Greg Gilbert, and *The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ* written by Ray Ortlund were most helpful for me to affirm that Keller's ministries are based on a biblical understanding of the gospel. In this regard, Matt Chandler's assertion was very beneficial to see that there is no such thing as two gospels in the Bible. Chandler argues, "The gospel on the ground" (individual focused) and "the gospel in the air" (kingdom focused) are complementary understandings of "the same gospel as the same redemptive plan God has for the world in the work of his Son."³⁹

In June 2016, I studied various issues regarding worldview and the significance of contextualization of the gospel when I took Cultural Anthropology and Christian Witness led by David Sills. I presented my topical research paper on "Implications of Orality" and pointed out that oral learners who have an unbiblical worldview cannot understand the gospel message that a missionary intends to share. The reason is that their unbiblical worldview distorts the message of the gospel. Thus, a missionary should contextualize the gospel in culturally understandable ways without diluting the message of the gospel.⁴⁰ Comprehending the issues of worldview and

³⁹ Matt Chandler, *The Explicit Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 175.

⁴⁰ See James Bowman, "Communicating Christ through Oral Tradition: A Training Model for Grass Roots Church Planters," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 20, no. 1 (January 2003): 25-27; Rick Brown, "Communicating God's Message in an Oral Culture," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 21, no. 3 (July 2004): 122-28; Dawn Herzog Jewell, "Winning the Oral Majority: Mission Agencies

contextualization helped me to see why Keller highlights and articulates the importance of contextualizing the gospel for unbelievers in postmodern contexts.

The last class in the coursework of my doctoral work at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was a colloquium on apologetics led by Adam Greenway. This class was my first study in apologetics. In this class, the professor clarified the importance of apologetics in that it can contribute not only to evangelic ministry but also to discipleship. This means that “apologetics can help unbelievers to overcome intellectual obstacles to conversion and believers to remove doubts that hinder their spiritual growth.”⁴¹ Greenway’s teaching was beneficial for me to break my tendency not only to underestimate the importance of reason and logic but also my propensity to equate the emotional experience of becoming a Christian with becoming a mature Christian. In addition, it was helpful for me to know the reason why Keller highlights the importance of apologetics and does not think that faith and reason are divorced. He says, “My faith is to some degree based on reasoning that the existence of God makes the most sense of what we see in nature, history and experience. . . . So my faith is based on logic and argument.”⁴² One of his church’s slogans is “Skeptics Welcome,” and his church has various ways of helping unbelievers and believers discuss their doubts about Christianity.⁴³

After I completed my comprehensive exams, I found that what I had learned during my coursework in the Ph.D. program is deeply related to a number of topics that

Rethink Outreach to the World’s Non-Literate Masses,” *Christianity Today* 50, no. 3 (March 2006): 56-58; Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, “Making Disciples in Oral Learners,” accessed April 13, 2016, https://www.lausanne.org/docs/2004forum/LOP54_IG25.pdf; W. Jay Moon, “Discipling through the Eyes of Oral Learners,” *Missiology* 38, no. 2 (April 2010): 127-40; Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Methuen, 1982); M. David Sills, “How Shall They Hear the Gospel?” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 9, no. 4 (2005): 62-79.

⁴¹ J. P. Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997), 131.

⁴² Kristof, “Am I a Christian, Pastor Timothy Keller?”

⁴³ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Redeemer–Skeptics Welcome,” *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed March 29, 2017, https://www.redeemer.com/learn/skeptics_welcome.

Keller focuses on: the understanding of the gospel for human beings and cultural engagement, social justice, revival, contextualization, worldview, and apologetics. More importantly, his understanding of the gospel is the center of all these themes. All of these themes are based on the gospel, reinterpreted and empowered by the gospel, and results of the gospel. I thought that if I would write my dissertation on Keller I would be able to analyze and critique him based on what I had studied in my coursework.

In addition, Keller is one of the most popular pastors among South Korean believers. Ten of his books have been translated into Korean and have been exceptionally popular in South Korea. Since many Korean churches have plateaued or been in a state of decline, Korean pastors strive to find models or methods to bring unbelievers to their churches. A great number of them regard Keller's ministry or model as a new breakthrough for church growth. They assume that if they follow Keller's way of ministry, their churches will increase. However, Keller's ministry is much more than a methodology of church growth that concentrates on saving souls. Furthermore, his model itself does not have the power to convert unbelievers. Thus, the pastors should have knowledge of Keller's understanding of the gospel, how he communicates the gospel clearly with those who are familiar with postmodernism, and how the gospel formulates church ministries. I hope I can help them to understand these topics.

Methodology

This research examined Keller's understanding of the gospel and his integration of evangelism and social concern at RPC. I went through four steps in conducting my research for this dissertation. First of all, this study focused on bibliographic research. Keller is author and co-author of more than twenty books. Unfortunately, The James P. Boyce Centennial Library of Southern Seminary did not have all books that Keller has published; however, I have purchased many of them for my own personal library and have access to others through interlibrary loan. In addition, I have bought Keller's transcripts of over 1,388 sermons from 1989 to 2015 through Logos Bible Software. Thus, I could

search for and read what was necessary for my dissertation, instead of listening to his all sermons.

In the second step, I did an exegesis of key biblical passages that Keller used in his primary messages on the gospel. I utilized grammatical, historical, and literary analysis rather than higher criticism for my exegesis. Based on my exegesis, I carefully read his sermons, noting references to the gospel as well as to evangelism and social action. I also analyzed Keller's sermons to know his understanding of the gospel and to learn how he contextualized the gospel for believers and unbelievers. It was impossible to exegete all passages that Keller mentions in 1,388 sermons, twenty-two books, and his articles; therefore, I limited myself to examining key passages. As a result, it was possible to evaluate whether his understanding of the gospel is based on the Bible or not. In addition, I also examined scholarly writings on the understanding of the gospel. This examination was not an exhaustive analysis, but was helpful to clarify the biblical meaning of the gospel.

In the third step, I traveled to Redeemer Presbyterian Church and spent nineteen days there. There is no other place where Keller's understanding of the gospel more vividly formulates church ministries than at RPC. I used participant observation and interviewed ministers and some attendees to learn about specific examples of how the gospel affected evangelism, discipleship, social justice, and cultural engagement.

Finally, the internet was a further channel of profitable research. Keller continues to upload his thoughts on his blog and Facebook. The homepage of Redeemer City To City also keeps Keller's teachings on church planting, the gospel, contextualization, social justice, integrating faith and job, and cultural engagement. His articles, newsletters on him and Redeemer Church, and personal interviews with him can be found on the internet.

Limitation and Delimitations

This dissertation has one limitation and five delimitations. The limitation is that since Keller's life and his ministry are still ongoing; he might change his views on the gospel and the relationship between evangelism and social ministry.

A delimitation is that this study focuses on Keller's pastoral ministry at Redeemer. It will not cover every aspect of his life but address his life as far as his past experiences have influenced on his understanding of the gospel and the integration of evangelism and social concern. Because there is no autobiography nor biographies of Keller's life, the introduction of his books and his sermons serve as a resource for his experience. Because of the lack of biographical resources, other dissertations on Keller include limited biographical details.⁴⁴

Second, this research is delimited in that this dissertation will not cover every passage of the Bible that Keller uses to support his views of the gospel. However, every effort has been made to exegete the critical passages on which Keller's understanding of the gospel is built. It is not difficult to identify these texts, because he frequently cites them as his foundation for his arguments.

Third, this study is delimited to Keller's understanding of the gospel and its influence on RPC until June 2017, when he stepped down as senior pastor of Redeemer Church; he works as full-time instructor in a partner program with Reformed Theological Seminary and in Redeemer's City to City church planting network. In addition, Redeemer

⁴⁴ For example, see Andrew Arthur, "The Role of Biblical Theology in the Gospel-Centered, Expository Preaching of Timothy Keller" (Ph.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011); Rudolph T. Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy: A Study of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City" (Ph.D. diss., University of Georgia, 2000); Rochelle L. Cathcart, "Preaching and Culture: An In-Depth Analysis of the Engagements with Culture in the Sermons of Rob Bell, Timothy Keller, and Michael Pflieger" (Ph.D. diss., Trinity International University, 2012); Travis Allen Freeman, "Preaching to Provoke a Worldview Change: Tim Keller's Use of Presuppositional Apologetics in Preaching" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012); Michael Raymond Galdamez, "Worldview Preaching in the Church: The Preaching Ministries of J. Gresham Machen and Timothy J. Keller" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012); Joshua B. Laxton, "Evaluating the Ministry of Timothy Keller and Redeemer Presbyterian Church through James Davison Hunter's 'Faithful Presence within' Cultural Engagement Paradigm" (Ph.D. diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015).

Church has been divided into three local churches in which there are three different senior pastors.⁴⁵ Since the focus of this research is on the understanding of Keller's gospel and the integration of evangelism and social concern in the ministry of Redeemer Church, sermons and ministries at Redeemer Church after June 2017 has not been considered.

Fourth, this research explores Keller's understanding of the gospel and its influence on the ministry in RPC, but it does not present a comprehensive analysis of his theology. Although a full analysis of Keller's theology would be a valuable study, the constraints of that task must be left to another researcher.

Fifth, this study is delimited in that it focuses on what Keller believes and argues, not on what actually happened in the RPC neighborhood. In other words, this research does not provide any hard evidence or any document that indicates if the integration of evangelism and social concern actually occurs in quantifiable fashion. Future researchers may do that by conducting demographic and sociological studies.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is to clarify the integration of evangelism and social concern in the ministry of Timothy Keller. It also examines if the integration is based on the wholeness of the gospel. In order to accomplish the research goal, this dissertation addresses the seven research questions in following chapters. In chapter 2, Keller's life and ministry are articulated. Chapter 3 concentrates on Keller's understanding of the gospel. The fourth chapter expounds why and how the gospel promotes both personal and social impacts. The fifth chapter clarifies how Keller's understanding of the gospel shapes five ministry areas of RPC. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes with a summary of the research. It also provides areas of further study and a short reflection on Keller's contribution to Christianity.

⁴⁵ Kate Shellnutt, "Tim Keller Stepping Down as Redeemer Senior Pastor," *ChristianityToday.Com*, accessed March 29, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2017/february/tim-keller-stepping-down-nyc-redeemer-senior-pastor.html>.

CHAPTER 2

TIMOTHY KELLER AND HIS MINISTRY AT REDEEMER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Introduction

For the purpose of examining the integration of evangelism and social concern in the ministry of Timothy Keller and his understanding of the gospel, a survey of Keller's life and ministry is foundational. A person's biography influences the formulation of one's theology and ministry.¹ Keller's biography and his ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church will be divided into seven sections: Allentown, Pennsylvania; Bucknell University; Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary; Hopewell, Virginia; Westminster Theological Seminary; Before 9/11 at Redeemer; and After 9/11 at Redeemer.

Allentown, Pennsylvania

Timothy Keller, who was born in 1950, was raised in Allentown, Pennsylvania. His father was an art teacher, and his mother was a nurse.² His family attended a mainline Lutheran church. When he became a teenager, the church asked him to attend a confirmation course for two years. The class purpose was to enable young

¹ James Wm. McClendon, Jr., articulates how Christians' lives can shape theological thinking. To make his argument convincing, he examines the lives of the four persons: Dag Hammarskjöld; Martin Luther King, Jr.; Clarence Jordan; and Charles Ives. He then points out the connection between their lives and their understanding of the doctrine of atonement. McClendon argues that the doctrine is illuminated and improvised by their lives or the dominant imagery and visions made by their life experiences. Although McClendon overstates the strong connection between biography and theology, he shows how significant it is to understand biography for the purpose of comprehending one's theological thinking. James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1990).

² Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Redeemer Guide," accessed July 8, 2017, http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/welcome_book.pdf.

people to understand Christian beliefs, practices, and history so that they could publicly confess their faith. During these two years of classes, he became confused about Christianity because two different instructors had different theological backgrounds. In the first year of the course, he was taught by a retired pastor, who was theologically traditional and conservative with a strong focus on the danger of hell and the need for faith. By contrast a young pastor, who was newly out of seminary, taught the second year of the class. This minister was a social activist, held to liberal Christian doctrines, and raised doubts about what Keller had learned during the first year. The stark contrast between the two ministers made him feel that he had been instructed in two different religions. In the midst of the confusion, he wanted to ask the instructors the question of “Which one of you is lying?”³

Bucknell University

Keller’s time at Bucknell University (1968-1972) was important in three areas. First, he acknowledged that both social activism and Christianity have problematic approaches to social justice. At Bucknell, he recognized systemic injustice against African Americans and civil rights workers in the United States. Keller was astonished that an entire society so easily rationalized unjust segregation.⁴ Under the influence of the Civil Rights Movement, he was interested in the social justice movement and participated in criticizing American bourgeoisie society. However, Keller identified inconsistency also in social justice adherents. He says,

I seemed to see two camps before me, and there was something radically wrong with both of them. The people most passionate about social justice were moral relativists, while the morally upright didn’t seem to care about the oppression going on all over the world. . . . But I kept asking the question, “If morality is relative,

³ Timothy J. Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Penguin, 2009), xi.

⁴ Timothy J. Keller, *Generous Justice: How God’s Grace Makes Us Just* (New York: Penguin, 2012), xv.

why isn't social justice as well?" This seemed to be a blatant inconsistency in my professors and their followers [of social justice].⁵

The traditional churches' approach to social problems was not a feasible alternative way of life and thought for him, even though he recognized the contradiction of the social movement. At that time, Keller wondered, "Why did the nonreligious believe so passionately in equal rights and justice, while the religious people I knew could not have cared less?"⁶ He struggled with Christianity because he saw some Christians in the South supported segregation and were tempted to support the position biblically.⁷ According to him, "Christianity began to lose its appeal to me when I was in college."⁸ As a result, he experienced personal and spiritual crises, doubting his fundamental convictions about God, the world, and himself.⁹

Second, Keller was converted during his time at Bucknell.¹⁰ He desperately needed a third camp, which was neither social activism nor traditional churches. He hoped that he could find "a group of Christians who had a concern for justice in the world but who grounded it in the nature of God, rather than in their own subjective feelings."¹¹ In other words, Keller was looking forward to joining Christians who were not silent concerning social justice based on the unchanging truth. During his spiritually and personally challenging time, he participated in small-group Bible studies within Inter-

⁵ Keller, *The Reason for God*, xii.

⁶ Keller, *Generous Justice*, xvi.

⁷ Keller, *The Reason for God*, xii.

⁸ Keller, *Generous Justice*, xvi.

⁹ Timothy J. Keller, *Encounters with Jesus: Unexpected Answers to Life's Biggest Questions* (New York: Penguin, 2015), ix.

¹⁰ "Timothy Keller Author Profile," *NewReleaseToday*, accessed March 25, 2017, http://www.newreleasetoday.com/authordetail.php?aut_id=91.

¹¹ Keller, *The Reason for God*, xiii.

Varsity Christian Fellowship.¹² Keller met “the Lord of the Word” when he read the NT gospel accounts. He discovered living faith in Jesus, saying, “But during college, the Bible came alive in a way that was hard to describe. The best way I can put it is that, before the change, I pored over the Bible, questioning and analyzing it. But after the change it was as if the Bible, or maybe Someone through the Bible, began poring over me, questioning and analyzing me.”¹³ His conversion and fellowship at InterVarsity Christian Fellowship helped him to experience the existence of a third camp.¹⁴

Third, Keller realized spiritual awakening is not human work, but God’s work. Students boycotted classes and voiced their opinions about anything before an open microphone during the antiwar movement in 1970. In the chapter, at Bucknell, at this time, there were only about ten or fifteen InterVarsity members. Its small number of students discussed Jesus Christ, and a student contended that Jesus is the answer to all human problems. InterVarsity students then hung up a sign: “The resurrection of Christ is intellectually credible and existentially satisfying.”¹⁵ Then they sat under the sign to engage with people who might be interested in talking about it. When they began the meeting of the year in September, their little group of ten individuals was astonished by more than a hundred students who showed up for the first meeting. After that, InterVarsity experienced greatly fruitful evangelism even though its members had neither planned any campaign nor expected this result. Keller believed that God initiated this awakening on his campus.¹⁶

¹² Keller, *Encounters with Jesus*, ix.

¹³ Timothy J. Keller, *Jesus the King: Understanding the Life and Death of the Son of God* (New York: Penguin, 2013), xx.

¹⁴ Keller, *The Reason for God*, xiii.

¹⁵ Timothy J. Keller, “Defining a Gospel Movement,” *Redeemer City to City*, accessed August 28, 2017, <http://www.redeemercitytocity.com/blog/defining-a-gospel-movement>.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

Keller realized the necessity for Christ-centered preaching from Edmund P. Clowney, the president of Westminster Theological Seminary. He began to experience fellowship with Clowney at Bucknell. InterVarsity Christian Fellowship students at Bucknell decided to conduct a major evangelistic outreach. At that time, Keller asked Clowney to come to the outreach as a guest speaker, and that outreach was quite successful. Clowney was impressed by a well-conceived outreach.¹⁷ After his graduation from Bucknell, Keller studied theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and worked with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in Boston, Massachusetts.¹⁸ At Gordon-Conwell, he met Clowney again when Clowney was asked to deliver the Staley Lectures on Preaching Christ from the OT. While Keller listened to Clowney's lectures, he realized how important it is to have a Christ-centered approach to preaching to make the gospel plain and transform the heart.¹⁹ He explains,

I [was] blown away by his teaching. [I] received from him one of the three or four main ingredients for [my] own future ministry. I had taken several courses with Richard Lovelace that had revealed the difference between moralistic religiosity (even of a doctrinally sound, biblical sort) and gospel renewal. Now, in Clowney, I realized I had discovered the application of this distinction to preaching. Moralistic sermons worked only on the will, but Christ-centered preaching clarified the gospel and changed the heart.²⁰

Keller married his wife, Kathy, in 1975, which was his final year at Gordon-Conwell. They met when she had visited her sister, who was Keller's friend at Bucknell. Although they had met in college, they did not know each other well until they met again

¹⁷ Timothy J. Keller, "The Girl Nobody Wanted," in *Heralds of the King: Christ-Centered Sermons in the Tradition of Edmund P. Clowney*, ed. Dennis E. Johnson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 53-54.

¹⁸ "Timothy Keller Author Profile."

¹⁹ Keller also tells about Clowney's strong influence on him and argues that Clowney's sermon changed the way he understands Christianity. He says, "I almost felt I had discovered the secret heart of Christianity." Timothy J. Keller, *The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith* (New York: Penguin, 2011), xiii.

²⁰ Keller, "The Girl Nobody Wanted," 54-55.

at Gordon-Conwell. Their relationship developed, while they studied together at Gordon-Conwell, from that of classmates to spouses. They expected it would be difficult for them to find church-related jobs following graduation, so they decided to be postal carriers to make their living. They took the civil service exam and prepared well to become mail carriers but, at the last minute, God called Keller to be the three-month interim pastor of Hopewell Presbyterian Church in Hopewell, Virginia, where he worked for nine years.²¹

Hopewell, Virginia

Keller developed his Christ-centered preaching and theological foundation for mercy ministry during his first pastoral charge at West Hopewell Presbyterian Church in Hopewell, Virginia, from 1975 to 1984, during which time he delivered approximately 1,500 expository sermons.²² These expository messages covered most of the Scriptures. It was extremely hard for him to preach Christ in the OT in a way that honors the writer's intention in the particular text without interpreting the text allegorically or squeezing Jesus at the end of sermons; yet he kept dedicating himself to preaching Christ throughout the entire Bible.²³

Keller decided to enroll in a doctor of ministry program at Westminster Theological Seminary while he was in Hopewell. The topic of his dissertation was the training of deacons. His supervisor asked him to study the history of the office of deacon and to develop ways of recovering the lost aspect of deacons' ministry, which focuses on assisting the needy in the community. The process of writing his dissertation transformed Keller. He identified not only a biblical foundation for mercy ministry, but practical strategies to aid those who are in physical, emotional, and economic difficulties. His

²¹ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Redeemer Guide."

²² Timothy J. Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 211.

²³ Keller, "The Girl Nobody Wanted," 53-54.

dissertation was implemented for courses of training deacons in their ministry that served people in material and economic need, too. His church served the community both with the word ministry of preaching and teaching, and with the deed ministry of helping neighbors in need.²⁴ In Hopewell, Keller additionally experienced church growth from ninety people to three hundred individuals and helped to plant fifteen churches as the church-planting director for the Mid-Atlantic Presbytery.²⁵

Westminster Theological Seminary

Keller moved to Philadelphia as the Associate Professor of Practical Theology at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. His Westminster tenure was significant due to three aspects. Initially, it enabled him to reflect on his pastoral ministry. He observes, “It gave me the opportunity to do more theological reflection on virtually everything. I had to teach preaching. I had to teach leadership. I had to teach evangelism. It basically deepened me all the way around.”²⁶ In other words, by spending about a decade reflecting and studying, Keller developed and synthesized his pastoral theology, which constituted the basis of his pastoral ministry at Redeemer.

Second, Keller understood the significance of urban ministry and actively took part in it in Philadelphia. When he was a faculty member at Westminster, it had a flourishing urban-ministry department that “re-sensitized [him] to the importance of the city.”²⁷ It enabled him to hold a positive view of the city and to consider ways the gospel could transform the city. Keller learned urban missions from Harvie Conn, who was the

²⁴ Keller, *Generous Justice*, xvii-xviii.

²⁵ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Redeemer Guide.”

²⁶ Drew Dyck, “Balancing Acts,” *CT Pastors*, accessed August 7, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2012/fall/balancing-acts.html>.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

chairman of his department.²⁸ He acknowledges Conn’s influence on his comprehension of urban ministry, saying that “as I look back on those times, I realize I was learning far more from him than at the time I thought I was. I read his little book *Evangelism: Doing Justice and Preaching Grace*²⁹ twenty-five years ago, and its themes sank deep into my thinking about God and the church.”³⁰

Keller became involved in urban ministry, served as Director of Mercy Ministries for his denomination, and published two books—*Resources for Deacons*³¹ and *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road*.³² These two books expound the theological basis and practical strategies for mercy ministry. He was not only an active participant in an evangelistic outreach to Muslims and homosexuals, but also helped to organize ministry for people in great need like those with AIDS.³³ Keller later confesses that Conn’s teaching on urban ministry and all of his experiences in an urban Philadelphia church were two of his motives for accepting his denomination’s invitation to plant a church in New York City.³⁴

Third, Keller received a request to plant a new church in Manhattan. The Presbyterian Church in America planned to plant a church in New York City when he taught at Westminster Theological Seminary. In March 1987, Terry Gyger—the Director

²⁸ Timothy J. Keller, “Lord of the City” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, January 7, 2001), Logos Bible Software.

²⁹ Harvie M. Conn, *Evangelism: Doing Justice and Preaching Grace* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1992).

³⁰ Keller, *Generous Justice*, xix.

³¹ Timothy J. Keller, *Resources for Deacons: Love Expressed through Mercy Ministries* (Lawrenceville, GA: Christian Education and Publications of the Presbyterian Church in America, 1985).

³² Timothy J. Keller, *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2015).

³³ “Timothy Keller Author Profile.”

³⁴ Keller, *Generous Justice*, xix.

of Mission to North America—told him he had seen a number of disadvantages of “outside-in model of reaching a city,” when a church planter starts a new church outside of a city to reach the downtown of the city. Instead, Gyger argued for an “inside-out” model, in which a healthy and strong church in a city’s downtown reaches individuals all over the metro area.³⁵ Gyger asked to do the field research, establish the foundation for planting a church in NYC, and recruit the most-appropriate person for the project.³⁶ Keller did not consider himself to be a proper candidate for this work.³⁷ He was satisfied with his life in a very livable Philadelphia suburb, and his fruitful ministry as a professor and a director in his denomination. In addition, he did not even think of breaking his Westminster Theological Seminary contract.³⁸

Terry Gyger persuaded him to begin a new church in the city after two candidates turned down the offer of planting a new church. Gyger thought that Keller was an appropriate candidate for this project, even though he did not possess pastoral experience in a big city. According to Gyger, “I just saw in him the raw ingredients. . . . I felt he had the inquisitiveness. He had the intellectual capital. He was very articulate, even though he had not had a lot of preaching experience in the big pulpits of our denomination.”³⁹ Gyger recognized Keller’s potential for planting a church in NYC

Keller and his wife, Kathy, were not sure if they were appropriate NYC church planters. For her, planting a new church in the Manhattan area meant raising three boys in

³⁵ Timothy J. Keller and J. Allen Thompson, *Church Planter Manual* (New York: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2002), 7.

³⁶ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Redeemer Guide.”

³⁷ Rudolph T. Bartholomew, “Reviving Orthodoxy: A Study of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City” (Ph.D. diss., University of Georgia, 2000), 60.

³⁸ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Redeemer Guide.”

³⁹ Michael Luo, “Preaching the Word and Quoting the Voice,” *The New York Times*, February 26, 2006, accessed March 24, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/26/nyregion/preaching-the-word-and-quoting-the-voice.html>.

Manhattan, but also it would absorb most of their family time.⁴⁰ Moreover, no one knew whether or not the project would be successful. In this sense, it was difficult for her to leave the stable and livable life of Philadelphia behind to start a new church in NYC.⁴¹ Noticing his wife's strong hesitation with respect to planting a church, Keller remarked, "Well, if you don't want to go, then we won't go."⁴² She did not want to base the decision on her uneasiness with regard to raising children in the big city, asserting, "If you think this is the right thing to do, then exercise your leadership and make the choice. It's your job to break this logjam. It's my job to wrestle with God until I can joyfully support your call."⁴³

Keller was hesitant to accept the offer because he felt that he was not adequate for the work. Keller knew that he did not have any proper reasons not to plant a new church in NYC. Starting a church, however, was beyond not only his abilities, but it was additionally beyond the human abilities of anyone. For him, this situation meant one thing: "It would not be my talent, but my love for, and dependence on, God that would be

⁴⁰ Timothy J. Keller and Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (New York: Penguin, 2013), 245.

⁴¹ When Keller discussed the idea of planting a church in Manhattan, his wife laughed about the idea. She asked, "Take our three wild boys (the victims of below-average parenting, as well as indwelling sin) to the center of a big city? Expose them to varieties of sin that I hoped they wouldn't hear about until, say, their mid-30s?" Kathy Keller, "Why the City Is a Wonderful Place to Raise Children," *The Gospel Coalition*, accessed August 31, 2017, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-the-city-is-a-wonderful-place-to-raise-children>. Her concern about living in NYC is understandable, considering a *New York Daily News* report: "On a typical day in 1989, New Yorkers reported nine rapes, five murders, 255 robberies and 194 aggravated assaults." Annalises Griffin, "The Climate: New York in 1989," *NY Daily News*, accessed August 31, 2017, <http://www.nydailynews.com/services/central-park-five/climate-new-york-1989-article-1.1310861>. Ironically, when she posted her writing on *The Gospel Coalition* website in 2012, its title was "Why the City Is a Wonderful Place to Raise Children." Her opinion with respect to raising children a big city has been dramatically changed.

⁴² Keller and Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*, 244

⁴³ Ibid.

the critical factor in the project.”⁴⁴ Keller thought the real problem was he did not have enough love for, and reliance on, God.

Keller decided to start a new church in NYC after he read William Gurnall’s *The Christian in Complete Armour*. He was deeply touched by a specific passage: “It requires more prowess and greatness of spirit to obey God faithfully than to command an army of men; more greatness to be a Christian than a captain.”⁴⁵ This assertion delineates that it takes more courage to be a Christian than it does to become an army captain and broke his illusion that it was necessary for him to begin being very brave to assume the task.⁴⁶ Keller then made the decision to accept the job by remembering incarnated God, Jesus, admitting, “I didn’t have the prayer life I should have, I didn’t have the love of God I should have—but ultimately, to not go was just simply cowardice. And it was not being faithful to the One who had the bravery to come from heaven to earth and go to the cross for me.”⁴⁷ He expressed his decision about going to NYC by providing a year’s notice to Westminster Theological Seminary on July 1, 1988.⁴⁸

Before 9/11 at Redeemer in New York City

The Year 1989

Keller utilized a networking approach rather than an advertising approach to build a core group for a new church. His first goal was finding “gatherers,” or mature Christians, who can lead unbelievers to the church. In other words, his actual target was

⁴⁴ Keller and Thompson, *Church Planter Manual*, 10.

⁴⁵ William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1964), 12.

⁴⁶ Keller and Thompson, *Church Planter Manual*, 10.

⁴⁷ Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, “The Life and Times of Redeemer Presbyterian Church,” *The Gospel Coalition*, accessed August 25, 2017, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/life-and-times-of-redeemer-presbyterian-church>.

⁴⁸ Keller and Thompson, *Church Planter Manual*, 10.

the unconverted, whom mature believers brought to the new church.⁴⁹ In 1988, he started commuting to NYC regularly to perform field research and organize a core group.

In early 1989, Keller laid a foundation for the new church by making an effort to help the group of fifteen individuals identify a vision and values. Meetings with this group had the form of a Bible study, prayer time, and a discussion.⁵⁰ During a discussion session, to facilitate brainstorming, he posed three questions: “What are your Manhattan non-Christian friends like? What kind of church will be true to the needs of people like this and yet still be solidly biblical? And what needs are not being addressed by the other churches that are around?” A vision and core values slowly, but obviously, developed through a number of discussions and prayer meetings:

[Vision is] to transform the city of New York by enabling Manhattan professionals to reach their web of relationships for Christ, and through time to change the whole city. . . . [Core values follow]: (1) The gospel. The law yet grace. The gospel transforms everything. Neither a legalistic church nor a cheap grace church. (2) The Bible. Authoritative but covenantal and personal. Not just a book of rules but not merely literature. (3) The city. A connectional form. Very distinctive and true to our locale and our community, yet accountable to other churches in the region and the country.⁵¹

Keller and the core group believed that RPC should differ from both liberal mainline churches and conservative evangelical churches because it concentrated on reaching professional New Yorkers. Glen Klienkenect, a member of the core group and an elder of RPC, commented, “New York needed a new wineskin” to be able to reach unbelievers who had not been connected to local churches. They were urban professionals, whose views toward religion range from indifference to hostility.⁵² Liberal and evangelical churches failed to reach this people group although it was the heart of

⁴⁹ Timothy J. Keller, “An Evangelical Mission in a Secular City,” in *Center City Churches: The New Urban Frontier*, ed. Lyle E. Schaller (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 32.

⁵⁰ Bartholomew, “Reviving Orthodoxy,” 60-61.

⁵¹ Keller and Thompson, *Church Planter Manual*, 11-12.

⁵² Bartholomew, “Reviving Orthodoxy,” 61-62.

New York life and culture. Keller and the core group determined to plant a church that was open to skeptics, and new believers had a number of crucial questions about Christianity.⁵³

God's help prospered the ministry beyond all of Keller and the core group's expectations. He began the first evening-worship service with the group at a Seventh-day Adventist church on the Upper East Side of Manhattan on April 23, 1989. Before that service, Keller and the core group decided to invite people and hoped fifty individuals would attend the first service. The actual attendance at this service was eighty-five people, who included twenty-five Christians from the PCA.⁵⁴ His family moved to the city in June 1989.⁵⁵ The average evening-service attendance was nearly a hundred people by September 1989. At that time, Keller found that new members kept bringing nonbelievers to his church.⁵⁶ RPC opened with a morning service because the number of congregants surpassed the worship place capacity on the last Sunday of September 1989. Approximately 250 individuals participated in the morning or evening service by Christmastime.⁵⁷ Keller was surprised by the fact that a great number of nonbelievers and non-Protestants returned to RPC every week and asked questions pertaining to their doubts.⁵⁸

Keller devoted his time and energy to planting RPC during its initial three years. When Keller began to plant the church, he asked his wife to grant him three years

⁵³ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Redeemer History," accessed August 8, 2017, https://www.redeemer.com/learn/about_us/redeemer_history.

⁵⁴ Keller and Thompson, *Church Planter Manual*, 14.

⁵⁵ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Redeemer History."

⁵⁶ Keller and Thompson, *Church Planter Manual*, 14.

⁵⁷ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Redeemer History."

⁵⁸ Keller, "An Evangelical Mission in a Secular City," 35.

of special time to concentrate on church ministry, which means he decided to work much harder and longer than he could normally sustain. Kathy agreed with Keller's suggestion, and he could prioritize RPC ministry unless his physical health would be damaged or his family would be broken.⁵⁹

Keller could learn about NYC through meetings with newcomers to the church. People usually came up to him after a service to discuss their spiritual issues for counseling. Many of them were nonbelievers, and he met twenty-five to thirty individuals every week. These meetings allowed him to understand various contexts of non-Christians, such as the pressures of Wall Street and gay people. Furthermore, the meetings enabled him to receive direct feedback about his sermons and what parts were hitting, confusing, or missing people. In other words, by spending a great deal of time with people, Keller could then learn quickly about contexts of NYC and develop his preaching based on people's direct and acrid evaluation.⁶⁰

Fall 1989–Spring 1991

Keller confesses that there was an atmosphere of spiritual renewal during the first three years of RPC. When he started the church ministry, he recognized the same feeling of the sense of God's presence that he had experienced at Bucknell in 1970.⁶¹ Keller affirmed, "We had conversions, a sense of God's presence, changed lives—all the stuff everyone hopes for and we hoped for. But it was unusually thick and rich—beyond anything we expected."⁶² The Holy Spirit made the gospel the power and nominal Christians woke up. As a result, many non-Christians who lived in Manhattan were

⁵⁹ Keller and Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*, 145.

⁶⁰ Keller and Thompson, *Church Planter Manual*, 14.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶² Zylstra, "The Life and Times of Redeemer Presbyterian Church."

brought to RPC services and had faith in Jesus Christ through awakened Christians. Non-believer conversions in RPC created a huge enthusiasm among believers who attended other NYC churches. They began to come to RPC in order to bring their nonbeliever friends to RPC. New believers' testimonies concerning their conversion continued at that time. All of these led RPC to experience a church-growth explosion.⁶³ More than five hundred people came to morning and evening services in the fall of 1990. Attendance was over seven hundred individuals by spring 1991. According to Keller, 25 to 30 percent of RPC members were new believers at this time.⁶⁴ When Mac Pier interviewed Keller in 2011, Keller argued that the first and most significant reason for Redeemer's spiritual renewal and rapid growth is prayer.⁶⁵

The Year 1992

Inspired by Keller's teaching and preaching, Hope For New York was founded in 1992.⁶⁶ This nonprofit charitable organization is Redeemer's mercy and justice outreach to New York.⁶⁷ In his sermon, Keller maintained that a Christian's motivation for serving others in need is a natural response to the grace shown by the cross of Jesus, attesting; "A life poured out in deeds of mercy to those in need is an inevitable sign of true faith. It's inevitable."⁶⁸ Thus, Hope For New York desires to "create a New York City in which

⁶³ Keller additionally identified five factors that contributed to church growth from the congregation's viewpoint: "(1) we present the evangelical message in an educated mode, (2) we worship in the vernacular, (3) we offer choices of different worship formats and music styles, (4) we encourage specific ministry to meet people's needs, such as a divorce recovery ministry, and (5) we build connections in order to address people's loneliness." Keller, "An Evangelical Mission in a Secular City," 38-39.

⁶⁴ Keller and Thompson, *Church Planter Manual*, 15.

⁶⁵ Mac Pier, *Consequential Leadership: 15 Leaders Fighting for Our Cities, Our Poor, Our Youth and Our Culture* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 31.

⁶⁶ Hope for New York, "About Hope for New York," *Hope for New York*, accessed August 24, 2017, <http://hfny.org/about/>.

⁶⁷ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Redeemer Guide."

⁶⁸ Timothy J. Keller, "Ministries of Mercy" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New

individuals and communities experience spiritual, personal, social, and economic well-being through the demonstration of Christ’s love.” It began with a full-time-staff person, three affiliates, and a small number of volunteers in 1992, but has given more than \$10 million in grants and has over forty affiliates and hundreds of volunteers.⁶⁹

The Years 1993-96

Keller found that in early 1993, the growth in attendance did not increase for two reasons. Initially, RPC outgrew the space of the Adventist Church building, even though it conducted four different services each Sunday. He thought that the lack of space might hinder a goal of the church, which is evangelism. When the Hunter College auditorium became available, RPC moved to Hunter in the spring of 1993, to make room for new people over the metro area. Second, Keller was physically and emotionally exhausted in 1993. Although RPC had drastically grown, Redeemer’s leadership was still centralized in Keller. He had to make decisions for almost every RPC move. For this reason, it was not possible for him to provide proper staff supervision. In this situation, RPC hired Dick Kaufmann as co-Senior Pastor and Director of Operations to reduce Keller’s huge burden.⁷⁰

A large-scale RPC ministry restructuring helped Keller to recover from exhaustion. Kaufmann was instrumental in revising RPC to decentralize its ministry structure. Under Kaufmann’s guidance, staff members were able to make decisions on their own and then report their choices during staff meetings, instead of asking permission for all their actions. His basic church-ministry principle is, “Give your job to people whom you train and then empower to do it without asking your permission.”

York, March 24, 1991), Logos Bible Software.

⁶⁹ Hope for New York, “About Hope for New York.”

⁷⁰ Keller and Thompson, *Church Planter Manual*, 16.

Decentralizing the ministry enabled Keller not to be involved with all church ministries and church members. As a result, Keller could concentrate on what he had to do the most, and RPC began growing again. Church attendance was 1,150 people in 1994, and rose to 1,450 people in 1995.⁷¹

Keller decided to make RPC a multi-site church, instead of a megachurch in one location.⁷² As the church kept growing, Keller needed to consider locating new service sites, along with the Hunter College auditorium. He and Kaufmann devised a multisite church in four different locations around Central Park. Keller regarded four sites not as daughters of Redeemer, but as Redeemer itself. Redeemer members can participate in a service in their neighborhoods, which reinforces relational evangelism, creates fellowship with other believers, and performs ministry in their community. In addition, he felt that this method assists RPC in preparing for his retirement. While it is difficult to find a successor for the megachurch founder, Redeemer would not experience the same difficulty as the megachurch because the four locations of multi-congregational Redeemer would become four different churches with their own pastors following his retirement.⁷³ Keller presented the vision of a multi-sites church to the leader, staff, and congregation.

The Year 1997

When RPC made a decision to conduct its first capital campaign, it raised \$4.3 million dollars.⁷⁴ This money was intended to establish the multi-site church and to found Redeemer Church Planting Center.⁷⁵ RPC had supported church planting in New York

⁷¹ Keller and Thompson, *Church Planter Manual*, 17.

⁷² Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Redeemer History."

⁷³ Keller and Thompson, *Church Planter Manual*, 18.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ This name has changed to Redeemer City to City, which has helped to plant hundreds of churches in the largest cities in the world. Timothy J. Keller, "Church Planting Is What We Do," *Redeemer*

and global cities around the world since 1993, but launching the Church Planting Center in 1998 could offer church planters more specialized resources, such as financing, mentoring, and leadership training. It helped plant a number of churches around the world: the Teaneck, Hoboken, and Montclair churches in New Jersey; Grace Church in Palo Alto, California; and Harbour Church in San Diego, Toronto, Budapest, Sao Paulo, and London.⁷⁶

After 9/11 at Redeemer New York City

September 16, 2001

RPC experienced exponential growth following September 11, 2001. A great number of new people came to the RPC Sunday-morning service on the first Sunday after 9/11. The ordinary attendance at RPC was 2,800 people, but the attendance of that particular Sunday was 5,400 individuals. That morning, Keller added another service, stating, “Come back, and we’ll do another service right after this one.”⁷⁷ While the attendance at most other churches returned to normal levels after several weeks passed, eight hundred additional attendees continued coming to RPC each week after the attack.⁷⁸ According to him, RPC experienced great church growth: “For the following year, ministry was just intense—every meeting and service had more emotion and tears in it than usual. . . . A good number of people started coming to Redeemer after 9/11 and found Christ. Evangelism was fruitful.”⁷⁹

Presbyterian Church, accessed August 17, 2017, https://www.redeemer.com/redeemer-report/article/beta_groups_start_in_september1.

⁷⁶ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Redeemer History.”

⁷⁷ John Starke, “New York’s Post-9/11 Church Boom,” *The Gospel Coalition*, accessed August 22, 2017, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/new-yorks-post-911-church-boom>.

⁷⁸ Luo, “Preaching the Word and Quoting the Voice.”

⁷⁹ Starke, “New York’s Post-9/11 Church Boom.”

One of the reasons for RPC's fruitful evangelism was that Keller provided appropriate answers to people's questions pertaining to September 11 on the gospel story line. Travis Freeman notices this point in his dissertation, contending, "When people arrived at Redeemer on September 16, 2001, with their questions, Keller gave them answers. His ability to engage their worldview and give satisfying answers to their questions led them to continue attending."⁸⁰ During his first sermon after 9/11, Keller furnished his audience with two improper story lines and an appropriate story line to understand 9/11 with a reference to John 11. Maintaining that Jesus did not condemn three victims—such as Martha, Mary, and Lazarus—he rejected the first story line; 9/11 has happened because God is judging America for its sins. Keller additionally disagreed with the idea of demonizing the attackers, denying, "We represent goodness; they are absolute evil." Finally, he presented a gospel story line based on Christ's declaration that "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). Keller noted,

Jesus says, "I'm going to turn this death into a resurrection. I'm going to bring out of this something even greater than was there before." That's the gospel, by the way, storyline. Out of the cross comes the resurrection. Out of the weakness comes real strength. Out of repentance and admitting you're weak comes real, real power. . . . See, that's the gospel storyline. I'll tell you, the mayor and the governor and the most effective leaders are not saying, "We're being judged." They're not saying, "We're completely good, and they're completely evil." What they're saying is, "We can bring something even better out of this horrible thing. Out of this death, we can bring a resurrection."⁸¹

Ascertaining that Jesus had known the chief priests and the Pharisees had plotted to kill him just after the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11:53), Keller made it clear that the only way of bringing Lazarus out of death was for him to be killed on the cross. In other words, Jesus made the deliberate choice of resurrecting Lazarus at the expense of

⁸⁰ Travis Allen Freeman, "Preaching to Provoke a Worldview Change: Tim Keller's Use of Presuppositional Apologetics in Preaching" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 49.

⁸¹ Timothy J. Keller, "Truth, Tears, Anger, and Grace" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, September 16, 2001), Logos Bible Software.

his life. Then, Keller clarified that the Lord's purposeful decision to raise Lazarus out of the grave was the sign that God cares about our suffering. Keller claimed,

We have a God who is so committed to ending suffering and death that he was willing to come into the world and be involved in that suffering and death himself. . . . Only Christianity. Christianity alone, of all the religions, tells us God lost his Son in an unjust attack. Only Christianity tells us that. Only Christianity tells us God has suffered. . . . I don't know why he hasn't ended suffering and evil by now, but the fact that he was willing to be involved and he himself got involved is proof that he must have some good reason because he cares. He is not remote. He is not away from us.⁸²

With a reference to the death and resurrection of Lazarus, Keller responded to inquiries about 9/11: Where were you, God? How can we understand this tragedy? How can we cope with this tragedy? How will we make sense of this in relation to the gospel story line? Keller's active engagement with people's questions was helpful for them to continue attending RPC and believe in Jesus Christ.⁸³

The Year 2003

RPC launched the Center for Faith and Work in 2003, with the belief that the gospel can, and should, result in a city's cultural renewal. This feeling was based on Keller's teaching to RPC with respect to Christian cultural renewal.⁸⁴ To commence the Center for Faith & Work in 2003, RPC hired Katherine Leary Alsdorf in 2002, as its Founder and Executive Director. Prior to her RPC position, she had experienced a lack of guidance for integrating faith and work in high-tech industry for twenty years. Alsdorf knew how important and hard it is to promote the unique power of the gospel for cultural

⁸² Keller, "Truth, Tears, Anger, and Grace."

⁸³ Keller confesses the significance of 9/11 in terms of evangelism, saying, "For the next five years, I would talk to people about when they joined the church, and they said right after 9/11." Luo, "Preaching the Word and Quoting the Voice."

⁸⁴ Katherine Leary Alsdorf, "Gospel & Culture: November 4-5 in New York," *The Gospel Coalition*, accessed August 24, 2017, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/gospel-culture-november-4-5-in-new-york>.

renewal in day-to-day work.⁸⁵ The goal of the Center for Faith & Work was connecting, equipping, and mobilizing the church to engage with the world effectively, with special emphasis on the meaningful integration of faith and work.⁸⁶ In 2003, the Center for Faith and Work expanded some programs to fulfill its purpose: The Arts Greenhouse (comprehensive professional development ministries for artists), The Entrepreneurship Initiative (entrepreneurs), and Gotham Fellows (an extensive mentorship program for young professionals).⁸⁷

The Year 2004

It seemed unavoidable for RPC to purchase its first community-and-worship center because the average Sunday attendance was about 4,200 people by the fall of 2004. RPC conducted a Vision Campaign to buy a community-and-worship center with three emphases: starting community-formation ministries, promoting more church planting, and purchasing property in Manhattan. Pledges of \$19.2 million resulted from the campaign, and RPC purchased its property at 150 West 83rd Street at the end of 2006. In addition, the Redeemer Church Planting Center greatly expanded its ministry through money from the campaign, so that it helped to approximately double the number of churches to be planted worldwide.⁸⁸

The Year 2007

Keller's joint work with D. A. Carson in The Gospel Coalition enabled his influence to expand beyond NYC and the United States.⁸⁹ The Gospel Coalition began in

⁸⁵ Timothy J. Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* (New York: Penguin, 2014), 16-17.

⁸⁶ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Redeemer Guide."

⁸⁷ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Redeemer History."

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Michael Raymond Galdamez, "Worldview Preaching in the Church: The Preaching

2002, in a sidewalk café in Manhattan when Carson and Keller discussed what would become, in 2004, a Pastor’s Colloquium.⁹⁰ In 2004, forty pastors attended the colloquium to spend time getting to know one another and pray. The pastors realized that they had to “restore the center of historic, confessional Christianity in the Reformed heritage.”⁹¹ The majority of the forty pastors became Gospel Coalition council members, who argued about a preamble, statement of faith, and theological ministry vision, which are the Gospel Coalition foundations. The Gospel Coalition, which was officially held its first meeting in 2007, launched its first national conference at Trinity Evangelical Seminary.⁹² Keller’s deep involvement in the Gospel Coalition has allowed him to teach evangelical leaders for gospel-centered ministry across the country and the world.

The Year 2008

Keller thinks the best way to reach unbelievers in a city is planting new churches there, saying, “I believe that there is no more powerful way to reach a city with the gospel than to plant new churches in it.”⁹³ Based on this conviction, Redeemer City to City was founded as a part of RPC in 2000, and became a separate non-profit organization in 2008. To promote church planting, CTC has emphasized recruiting, assessing, training, coaching, and funding leaders who plant new churches in major cities around the world.⁹⁴

Ministries of J. Gresham Machen and Timothy J. Keller” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 36.

⁹⁰ Wen Reagan, “The Gospel Coalition,” in *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the United States*, ed. George Thomas Kurian and Mark A. Lamport (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 982.

⁹¹ D. A. Carson and Timothy J. Keller, “What Is the History and Future of The Gospel Coalition?” *The Gospel Coalition*, accessed August 25, 2017, <http://resources.thegospelcoalition.org/library/what-is-the-history-and-future-of-the-gospel-coalition>.

⁹² Reagan, “The Gospel Coalition,” 932.

⁹³ Timothy J. Keller, “Church Planting Is What We Do,” *Timothy Keller*, accessed August 28, 2017, <http://www.timothykeller.com/blog/2015/12/3/church-planting-is-what-we-do>.

⁹⁴ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Redeemer Guide.”

RCC has helped to start 432 churches around the world and to train more than thirteen thousand leaders since its 2000 inception.⁹⁵

His publishing a number of books has greatly expanded Keller's influence.⁹⁶ He released two of them in 2008: *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* and *The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith*. The former is designed for a rational defense of belief in God, just like *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis, and is intended for not only believers, but for such unbelievers as skeptics.⁹⁷ This book moved up to seventh on the *The New York Times* nonfiction best-seller list.⁹⁸ It received awards from *World Magazine*⁹⁹ and from *Christianity Today*. By writing the book, Keller has been called "a C. S. Lewis for the 21st Century [and] a high-profile Christian apologist who can make orthodox belief not just palatable but necessary."¹⁰⁰ The latter was published in November 2008. It was one of *The New York Times* nonfiction best-selling books, as well.¹⁰¹ By examining Luke 15:11-32, in this work, Keller delineates the significant message of Jesus: God's prodigal grace toward *both* the irreligious (the younger

⁹⁵ Zylstra, "The Life and Times of Redeemer Presbyterian Church."

⁹⁶ Eleanor Barkhorn, "How Timothy Keller Spreads the Gospel in New York City, and Beyond," *The Atlantic*, February 21, 2011, accessed September 1, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2011/02/how-timothy-keller-spreads-the-gospel-in-new-york-city-and-beyond/71301/>.

⁹⁷ Keller mentioned C. S. Lewis fourteen times in the book and observed that his own life and book are inspired by Lewis. Anthony Sacramone, "An Interview with Timothy Keller," *First Things*, accessed September 1, 2017, <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2008/02/an-interview-with-timothy-kell>.

⁹⁸ "Best Sellers," *The New York Times*, March 23, 2008, accessed September 1, 2017, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=990CE3DC133AF930A15750C0A96E9C8B63>.

⁹⁹ Marvin Olasky, "Books of the Year," *World Magazine*, accessed September 1, 2017, https://world.wng.org/2017/03/books_of_the_year_sort_of.

¹⁰⁰ Lisa Miller, "The Smart Shepherd," *Newsweek*, February 9, 2008, accessed May 17, 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/smart-shepherd-93595>. Keller takes the title as a compliment but does not think that he even deserves to be mentioned in the same line with C. S. Lewis. Sacramone, "An Interview with Timothy Keller."

¹⁰¹ "Best Sellers," *The New York Times*, May 8, 2011, accessed September 2, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/books/best-sellers/2011/05/08/paperback-nonfiction/>.

son) and the moralistic (the older son). He clarifies God's grace as the subject of the book with the words, "God's reckless grace is our greatest hope, a life-changing experience, and the subject of this book."¹⁰²

Following the release of the two books in 2008, he has continued to publish books every year. Keller had intentionally postponed writing his books until late in his career, explaining,

I'm 60. I've been here for 20 years. I've had almost 40 years of ministry. I waited deliberately to write for a few reasons: One is I wanted to get pretty much mature in my thinking. In other words, I've pretty much come mostly to my conclusions. If I were a man in my 30s or even my 40s writing, then I would be afraid that I'd evolve on past what I'd written down. Also, I've got a lot more material because I've been working this stuff through. . . . I waited for that reason: I felt like it would be better stuff if I waited.¹⁰³

He had waited for his later career to finalize his thinking and possess sufficient material regarding various topics. Keller has now become a prolific writer.¹⁰⁴ The popularity of his books makes people recognize him as one of the most influential evangelical leaders.¹⁰⁵

The Year 2017

In February 2017, Keller announced that he would step down as senior pastor of RPC, and that one large church (RPC) will become three churches on the East Side, the West Side, and Downtown. Each of these churches has its own senior pastors, elders,

¹⁰² Keller, *The Prodigal God*, xv.

¹⁰³ Barkhorn, "How Timothy Keller Spreads the Gospel."

¹⁰⁴ Keller published seventeen books in eight years: *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power* (2009); *Generous Justice* (2010); *Gospel in Life: Grace Changes Everything* (2010); *King's Cross: The Story of the World in the Life of Jesus* (2011); *The Meaning of Marriage* (2011); *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (2012); *Every Good Endeavor* (2012); *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness: The Path to True Christian Joy* (2012); *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering* (2013); *Encounters with Jesus* (2013); *Galatians for You* (2013); *Judges for You* (2013); *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (2014); *Romans 1-7 for You* (2014); *Preaching* (2015); *The Songs of Jesus: A Year of Daily Devotions in the Psalms* (2015); *Romans 8-16 for You* (2015); *Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical* (2016); and *Hidden Christmas: The Surprising Truth behind the Birth of Christ* (2016).

¹⁰⁵ Zylstra, "The Life and Times of Redeemer Presbyterian Church."

and leaders. He believed that this transition is much better than a centralized RPC based on three benefits. First, three churches will be better able to reach their neighborhoods than a single large RPC would be able to do. Second, three churches are great at raising up new leaders. Third, three churches are far better than is RPC in terms of starting new churches around NYC.¹⁰⁶ This big transition, which has been planned since 1997, is not a succession plan after Keller's retirement, but "a vision for not being a megachurch."¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

This chapter sought to establish a foundation for comprehending the integration of evangelism and social concerns in the ministry of Timothy Keller by surveying Keller's biography and his ministry as a senior pastor at RPC. Three important experiences identified in his life influenced the formation of the RPC ministry. First, during his early Christian life, he pursued a third camp, which is neither social activism nor traditional churches. This camp consisted of a group of Christians with concern for justice based on God's nature. As a third camp, RPC clarified that it is not a liberal mainline church but is conservative evangelical with social concern in its beginning. Second, Keller concentrated not only on the word ministry (Christ-centered preaching and evangelism), but also on the deed ministry (helping those who are in need) during his first pastorate. RPC launched both Redeemer City to City for church planting and Hope for New York for mercy and justice ministry. In addition, RPC founded the Center for Faith and Work to help its congregation to integrate faith with their jobs (cultural renewal). The next chapter will seek to make Keller's understanding of the gospel plain for ascertaining whether it is a foundation of his integration of evangelism and social concern in the RPC ministry.

¹⁰⁶ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "February 26 Announcement," accessed August 28, 2017, https://www.redeemer.com/r/february_26_announcement.

¹⁰⁷ Kate Shellnutt, "Tim Keller Stepping Down as Redeemer Senior Pastor," *ChristianityToday.Com*, accessed March 29, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2017/february/tim-keller-stepping-down-nyc-redeemer-senior-pastor.html>.

CHAPTER 3
TIMOTHY KELLER’S UNDERSTANDING
OF THE GOSPEL

Introduction

The gospel is the heart of Christianity. Christians consider the gospel to be more important than anything else.¹ It is the power of God for salvation to human beings. It is the message through which their lives are renewed. It is the foundation upon which they build their churches throughout the world. It is the lens through which they understand the Lord, themselves, and others. In this sense, the gospel is the center of Christianity.

Greg Gilbert points out that there is a heated debate over what the good news of Jesus is and analyzes the heated debate into two positions about defining how broad or how focused is the gospel.² While the first camp focuses on the message that “God is

¹ Following are some examples of theologians and pastors who highlight the centrality of the gospel in Christianity. For instance, Millard Erickson acknowledges the significance of the gospel by saying, “Paul viewed the gospel as centering on Jesus Christ and what God has done through him.” Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 982. D. A. Carson and Timothy Keller place the gospel at the center of biblical theology, pointing out that “biblical theology should flow toward Jesus and the gospel.” D. A. Carson and Timothy J. Keller, *The Gospel as Center: Renewing Our Faith and Reforming Our Ministry Practices* (Wheaton IL: Crossway, 2012), 18. Greg Gilbert also admits the importance of the gospel, contending, “The gospel of Jesus Christ stands at the very center of Christianity, and we Christians claim to be about the gospel above all else.” Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 18.

² Following are some examples of the diversity of comprehending the gospel. Mark Dever holds that the good news is that the one and only God, who is holy, made us in his image to know him. But we sinned and cut ourselves off from him. In his great love, God became a man in Jesus, lived a perfect life, and died on the cross, thus fulfilling the law himself and taking on himself the punishment for the sins of all those who would ever turn and trust in him. He rose again from the dead, showing that God accepted Christ’s sacrifice and that God’s wrath against us had been exhausted. He now calls us to repent of our sins and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. If we repent of our sins and trust

going to renew and remake the whole world through Christ,” the second view highlights the message that “God is reconciling sinners to himself through the substitutionary death of Jesus.”³

The initial position argues for the gospel of God’s kingdom and has a tendency to comprehend the gospel in terms of cultural engagement, mercy ministry, or social

in Christ, we are born again into a new life, an eternal life with God. Now that is good news. (Mark Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007], 43)

Allen Wakabayashi insists,

The good news of Jesus Christ is primarily that Jesus has come to inaugurate the kingdom of God, to establish God’s good reign over all of creation. . . . He died to pay the price for our rebellion and to free creation from Satan’s dominion. He will return one day to bring it all to completion and fully establish the kingdom of God. This is good news. (Allen M. Wakabayashi, *Kingdom Come: How Jesus Wants to Change the World* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003], 35)

Scot McKnight asserts, “The gospel is the work of God to restore humans to union with God and communion with others, in the context of a community, for the good of others and the world.” Scot McKnight,

Embracing Grace: A Gospel for All of Us (Brewster, MA: Paraclete, 2012), xi. N. T. Wright maintains,

The good news that the crucified and risen Jesus is the Messiah of Israel and therefore the Lord of the world. . . . Good news! God is becoming King and he is doing it through Jesus! And therefore, *phew!* God’s justice, God’s peace, God’s world is going to be renewed. And in the middle of that, of course, it’s good news for you and me. But that’s the derivative from, or the corollary of the good news which is a message about Jesus that has a second-order effect on me and you and us. But the gospel is not itself about you are this sort of a person and this can happen to you. That’s the result of the gospel rather than the gospel itself. . . . Salvation is the result of the gospel, not the center of the gospel. (Trevin Wax, “Gospel Definitions: N. T. Wright,” *The Gospel Coalition*, accessed March 15, 2017, <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/trevinwax/2008/09/04/gospel-definitions-nt-wright/>)

Shailer Mathews attests, “[It] is the application of the teaching of Jesus and the total message of the Christian salvation to society, the economic life, and social institutions such as the state, the family, as well as to individuals.” Shailer Mathews, “Social Gospel,” in *A Dictionary of Religion and Ethics*, ed. Shailer Mathews and Gerald Birney Smith (New York: MacMillan, 1921), 416-17. A variety of different gospel definitions demonstrates a fog of confusion about what the gospel is. In this situation, a number of scholars and pastors attempt to clarify the meaning of the gospel. For instance, see D. A. Carson, “What Is the Gospel?—Revisited,” in *For the Fame of God’s Name: Essays in Honor of John Piper*, ed. Sam Storms and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 147-70; Matt Chandler, *The Explicit Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014); Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?*; J. D. Greear, *Gospel: Recovering the Power That Made Christianity Revolutionary* (Nashville: B & H, 2011); Michael Horton, *The Gospel-Driven Life: Being Good News People in a Bad News World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012); Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011); Blake Newsom, “What Is the Gospel?,” *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* 11, no. 2 (September 2014): 2-15; Ray Ortlund, *The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014); Trevin Wax, *Counterfeit Gospels: Rediscovering the Good News in a World of False Hope* (Chicago: Moody, 2011). These writers do not represent an exhaustive list, but are simply illustrative of the variety of efforts for understanding the meaning of the gospel.

³ Greg Gilbert, “Addendum: What Is the Gospel?,” in *Proclaiming a Cross-Centered Theology*, ed. Mark Dever and R. Albert Mohler (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 121.

justice based on the kingdom of God.⁴ For example, during the Industrial Revolution, Walter Rauschenbusch—who observed urban poverty and other social problems—argued for the social gospel.⁵ He defined sin as selfishness, claiming, “Sin is essentially selfishness. This is an ethical and social definition, and is proof of the unquenchable social spirit of Christianity.”⁶ Because he believed that “sin is not a private transaction between the sinner and God,”⁷ sin was, for him, corporate and social. In this sense, his understanding of salvation is regarded as the redemption of social order.⁸ His emphasis on redemption for the entire social system places the kingdom of God at the center of his doctrines. He called God’s kingdom “the marrow of the gospel.”⁹ He made an effort to perceive the progress of the kingdom of God not only in the actions of the church but, more importantly, in the flow of human history.¹⁰ Therefore, his ministry concentrated on

⁴ Four passages support this approach: Matt 4:23; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:18; and Acts 13:32-33. Gilbert, “Addendum: What Is the Gospel?,” 124-25. Ronald J. Sider presents the radical Anabaptist model and the ecumenical model (the World Council of Churches) as examples of this approach. Ronald J. Sider, *Good News and Good Works: A Theology for the Whole Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 36-44.

⁵ *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines the Industrial Revolution as “in modern history, the process of change from an agrarian and handicraft economy to one dominated by industry and machine manufacturing. This process began in Britain in the 18th century and from there spread to other parts of the world.” “Industrial Revolution,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed March 28, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Industrial-Revolution>. As a result of the Industrial Revolution, ordinary workers experienced cruel working conditions, such as child labor, dirty living conditions, and extremely long working hours, but they made money from 20 percent to 40 percent less than the minimum wage that was necessary for a modest quality of life. “United States History - The Struggles of Labor,” accessed March 28, 2017, <http://countrystudies.us/united-states/history-82.htm>.

⁶ Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: MacMillan, 1918), 47.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁸ Angel Santiago-Vendrell, “Evangelism and Social Responsibility,” *Apuntes* 24, no. 2 (2004): 51.

⁹ Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, 131.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 146.

participating in such labor reforms as the abolition of child labor and increasing living wage, the matter of eradicating poverty, and urban issues.¹¹

The second viewpoint, or the gospel for souls, inclines to define the gospel in terms of individual salvation.¹² For instance, Dwight L. Moody—who noticed the same social difficulties as did Rauschenbusch in the Industrial Revolution—focused on individual salvation. Even though he initiated a number of charitable activities, his primary emphasis was converting human beings.¹³ His emphasis on effecting a change of heart in individuals is based on his three Rs of the Bible: Ruined by the fall, Redeemed by the blood, and Regenerated by the Spirit.¹⁴ The main problem of humanity for Moody is that all souls ruined by the fall are destined for hell. Sinners are not saved by trying to keep the ethical commands of Jesus or benevolent activities, but by Christ’s blood and the work of the Spirit. Thus, his ministry stressed preaching the three Rs of the Scriptures with large North American and European revival campaigns. According to Lyle Dorsett, Moody traveled more than a million miles to preach the gospel to over a hundred million people.¹⁵

Considering the examples of Rauschenbusch and Moody, it can be maintained that a distinct understanding of the gospel between Rauschenbusch and Moody in the

¹¹ Melanie A. May, “The Kingdom of God, the Church, and the World: The Social Gospel and the Making of Theology in the Twentieth-Century Ecumenical Movement,” in *The Social Gospel Today*, ed. Christopher H. Evans (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 38.

¹² This view is based on at least four passages: Acts 10:36-43; Rom 1:16-17; 1 Cor 1:17-18; and 1 Cor 15:1-5. Gilbert, “Addendum: What Is the Gospel?,” 123–24. A. C. Dixon, Billy Sunday, Donald McGavran, and Billy Graham are proponents of this view. Although they cared about the poor and oppressed, their passion was focused on saving souls. See David O. Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Evangelism versus Social Concern* (Philadelphia: Holman, 1977), 31-33; Sider, *Good News and Good Works*, 33-36; Delos Miles, *Evangelism and Social Involvement* (Nashville: Broadman, 1986), 13-14.

¹³ Sebastian Kim and Kirsteen Kim, *Christianity as a World Religion* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 112.

¹⁴ Stanley N. Gundry, “The Three Rs of Moody’s Theology,” *Christian History* 9, no. 1 (February 1990): 16.

¹⁵ Lyle W. Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls: The Life of D. L. Moody* (Chicago: Moody, 2003).

Industrial Revolution led them to lean toward either practice: social or individual salvation.¹⁶ The fact that a different understanding of the gospel influences ministry formulation illustrates the significance of understanding the gospel to attain a healthy balance between evangelism and social involvement. This chapter will examine Keller's understanding of the gospel to clarify his integration of evangelism and social concern in the ministry of RPC.

The Gospel for Saving Individuals

Keller claims that the gospel for saving people stresses the question, "What must I do to be saved?" The answer can be outlined: who God is, what sin is, who Christ is and what he did, and what faith is.¹⁷

God

Keller articulates God in terms of Creator and a holy God.¹⁸

Creator. Keller believes that God is the self-existent Creator.¹⁹ He does not depend on anything for his being, but all things are dependent upon him.²⁰ According to Keller, because the universe is created by the Lord, David can see the magnificence and

¹⁶ In terms of individual and social salvation, Delos Miles contends that both individuals and structures may be redeemed by the gospel: "Evangelism is being, doing, and telling the gospel of the kingdom of God, in order that by the power of the Holy Spirit persons and structures may be converted to the lordship of Jesus Christ." Delos Miles, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman, 1983), 47.

¹⁷ Timothy J. Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 32.

¹⁸ In 1992, Keller presented a twelve-week series, "The Attributes of God," which included such titles as "Only True God: His Supremacy," "The Holy One: His Holiness," "The High and Lofty One: His Majesty," "The Face of God: His Immanence," and "The Only Wise God: His Sovereignty." In addition to this series, Keller often articulates the Lord's character in his sermons.

¹⁹ Timothy J. Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (New York: Penguin, 2016), 199.

²⁰ Timothy J. Keller, "God of the Nations" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, August 18, 2013), Logos Bible Software.

the magnitude of the Creator: When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place (Ps 8:3). This means that David perceives God's glory when he looks at what the Lord has created. Putting it differently, the universe shows David the Creator's glory. Keller says, "What David sees is the glory and the magnitude and the majesty and the magnificence of God because he has created all things with his fingers. He has created all things, everything . . . all the stars, all the planets, everything. . . . [It]'s true God made all things."²¹ In other words, Keller confesses that God is the Being of beings and gives being to all creatures.²²

Keller asserts that the fact that God is the Creator of the entire universe demonstrates that the Lord is the author of, and king over, the universe. To support the assertion, Keller provides an example of illustrating the vastness of the universe. He assumes, for the sake of argument, that the distance between the earth and the sun (93 million miles) is reduced to the thickness of a piece of paper. In this case, the distance between the earth and the nearest star would be a stack of papers that is seventy feet high. The diameter of our galaxy would be a 310-mile-high stack of papers. After Keller delineates that our galaxy is a little speck of dust in the universe, he contends that God should not be our assistant or consultant, but the King who holds the whole universe by the Word of his power (Heb 1). Keller maintains, "If you come into connection with a God like that, you are his assistant, if that. He has to be a king, not just something you bring in to add up, spice up your life, someone who you say, 'When I need you, I'll call you.' Oh no. See, if God is this God, how do you regard him? King. Center of life. Majesty."²³

²¹ Timothy J. Keller, "Maker of Heaven and Earth" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, January 16, 2011), Logos Bible Software.

²² Timothy J. Keller and Sam Shammas, *New City Catechism* (Middletown, DE: CreateSpace Independent, 2015), 12.

²³ Keller, "Maker of Heaven and Earth."

Keller insists that God created human beings for establishing an intimate relationship with him.²⁴ He believes that Genesis 1 does not focus on how the Lord created the world, but the reason God did, explaining, “The biblical teaching about creation is mainly not how God created the world but why, not mainly the method but the meaning.”²⁵ To articulate this meaning, Keller describes the triune God, who is infinitely happy as a community of persons who are pouring glory on each other, joyfully loving one another.²⁶ Based on, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God” (John 1:1), and “the Son was in the bosom of the Father” (John 1:18), Keller holds that triune God is a relational God, who is pouring out love and joy perfectly on one another.²⁷ The triune God created Adam and Eve to share everlasting joy and genuine love.²⁸ Keller states, “They were pouring love and joy completely back and forth into one another’s hearts, and they decided, ‘Let’s get some others. Let’s create some others so they can be part of the circle. Let’s get some others so they can experience the same joy we are.’”²⁹

Holy God. Keller comprehends God’s holiness in terms of the Lord’s incomparability over anything and anyone, defining the holiness as “his incomparable transcendent perfection by which he brooks no rivals and brooks no impurities.”³⁰ He argues that

²⁴ Timothy J. Keller, “How Can I Know God?,” *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed October 12, 2017, https://www.redeemer.com/skeptics_welcome/how_can_i_know_god.

²⁵ Timothy J. Keller, “Accepting the Creator” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, November 21, 1999), Logos Bible Software.

²⁶ Timothy J. Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Penguin, 2009), 227.

²⁷ Keller, “Accepting the Creator.”

²⁸ Keller, *The Reason for God*, 228.

²⁹ Keller, “Accepting the Creator.”

³⁰ Timothy J. Keller, “The Holy One” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York,

he is incomparable. Many times, over and over again, holiness means, “There’s none like you.” So 1 Samuel 2:2 says, “There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you . . .” Or Miriam sings the great song in Exodus 15. She says, “Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness . . .?” Isaiah, who is always talking about him as the Holy One . . . God says, “. . . I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me . . .” Psalm 86:8 says, “. . . there is none like you, O Lord . . .” So one of the things the word holiness means is, “He is unmatched. He is unequalled. He is unrivaled. There is no one at his level.”³¹

To articulate holiness more clearly, he points out that the Hebrew word *holy* (qādaš) in the OT literally means to cut or to separate. In the light of this meaning, Keller insists holiness implies being separate absolutely above and beyond others, saying that “the holiness of God is his superlativeness, his above aboveness and his beyond beyondness.”³²

Keller maintains that the holiness of God, which is the Lord’s superlativeness or incomparability, reveals sinners’ impurity.³³ The Holy God’s perfection so overwhelms those in his presence that they realize their true sinfulness. For instance, Job lamented that “now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I despise myself” (Job 42:5-6).³⁴ In addition, immediately after Isaiah experienced the Lord’s majesty, transcendence, and holiness in the vision, he was terrified in the presence of Holy God.³⁵ He complained, “Woe to me! I cried. I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty” (Isa 6:5).

April 10, 2011), Logos Bible Software.

³¹ Keller, “The Holy One.”

³² Timothy J. Keller, “The Holy One: His Holiness” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, September 27, 1992), Logos Bible Software.

³³ Keller, “The Holy One.”

³⁴ Keller, “The Holy One: His Holiness.”

³⁵ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 129.

These two examples illustrate that God’s holiness leads humans to a deep and a terrible sense of sin, along with an awful feeling of guilt.

Sin

Keller expounds sin in terms of essence, extent, nature, power, and consequences.³⁶

The essence of sin. Keller defines sin as “a distortion and dislocation of the heart from its true center in God.”³⁷ He admits that sin is disobedience to God’s law: “Sin is . . . not being or doing what he requires in his law.”³⁸ It is transgression of the law of God. Men and women commit sins when they deviate from what the Lord wants human beings to follow, like the Ten Commandments. Keller, however, concentrates much more on *sin* as an attitude, a disposition, a stance, or a posture of the heart, rather than on such *sins* as violating God’s laws.³⁹ In this sense, Keller contends that the essence of sin is a lack of centrality of God, attesting:

The character of sin is beautifully summed up in a little statement by Dorothy Sayers in which she defined sin as “a deep, interior dislocation of the soul.” It’s a wonderful little phrase. When a hip or a bone of any sort is dislocated, what is that? What’s the problem? It’s off center. It’s not centered at the spot it should be, and as a result, it wreaks tremendous havoc. The muscles, the tissue . . . There is all this cutting and grinding, you see. There is tremendous damage being done. There’s

³⁶ The doctrine of sin is prominent in Keller’s preaching at RPC. Keller devoted an entire series to the topic three times. First, in early 1993, a twelve-week series on the “Nature of Sin” included titles like “People of the Lie,” “Nakedness and the Holiness of God,” and “Death of Death.” Additionally, in 1995, he spent ten weeks preaching about “The Seven Deadly Sins,” such as “Anatomy of Sin” and “The Judgment on Sin.” Finally, in 1996, a ten-week series concerning “The Faces of Sin” delineated sin as predator, self-deceit, leaven, unbelief, self-righteousness, leprosy, and slavery. Along with these series regarding sin, Keller, in his sermons, quite frequently discusses the presence and problem of sin as the fundamental problems of humanity.

³⁷ Timothy J. Keller, “Two Ways the Gospel Changes Your View of Sin,” *LifeCoach4God*, accessed September 28, 2017, <https://verticallivingministries.com/2013/09/21/tim-keller-two-ways-the-gospel-changes-your-view-of-sin/>.

³⁸ Keller and Shammas, *New City Catechism*, 40.

³⁹ Timothy J. Keller, “Anatomy of Sin—Part 1” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, January 22, 1992), Logos Bible Software.

pain. Your hip doesn't work. You can't walk. You can't move. You can't move your arm. Sin is a dislocation of the soul. The soul should be centered on God If there is a God, then he'd be the great Creator, and everything in our lives should revolve around him and should center on him, but we said sin is the demand of the heart that everything, including God, revolve around me: my happiness, my goals, my agenda, and what makes me comfortable. That's sin. A dislocation of the soul. All of our problems come from our unwillingness to center on him, because we do not want to lose control. Whatever we center on controls us. We say we have no awe of him. We don't center on him.⁴⁰

Keller articulates that sin as the internal distortion in the heart is the foundation of all sins, like violation of God's law.

Keller feels the essence of sin, which is a lack of centrality of God, can be expressed by idolatry: "Idolatry is not only one sin among many, but what is fundamentally wrong with the human heart In other words, *idolatry is always the reason we ever do anything wrong*" (emphasis in original).⁴¹ Furthermore, he calls the human heart an "idol factory."⁴² Based on Genesis 1:26-28 and Romans 1:21-25, Keller holds that humans are created to worship the Lord, but instead worship created things. In other words, idols are substituted for the Creator, and these replacement gods are put in the center of human hearts.⁴³ Such dislocation illustrates that humanity has "the inexorable human drive for 'god-making.'"⁴⁴ Keller thus summarizes his view about idolatry,

The Bible does not consider idolatry to be one sin among many. Rather, the only alternative to true, full faith in the living God is idolatry. All our failures to trust God wholly or to live rightly are due at root to idolatry—something we make more

⁴⁰ Timothy J. Keller, "Anatomy of Sin—Part 2" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, January 29, 1992), Logos Bible Software.

⁴¹ Timothy J. Keller, *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope That Matters* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 165.

⁴² *Ibid.*, xvi.

⁴³ Timothy J. Keller, "Preaching the Gospel to the Heart," *Squarespace*, 11, accessed November 1, 2017, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5315f2e5e4b04a00bc148f24/t/55e0c99ee4b0f4b11e1cf5c0/1440795038107/Preaching+the+Gospel+to+the+Heart.pdf>. Keller maintains that the idols enslave men and women. In this sense, he understands sin as slavery, as well. See Timothy J. Keller, "Sin as Slavery" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, March 17, 1996), Logos Bible Software.

⁴⁴ Keller, *Counterfeit Gods*, 165.

important than God. There is always a reason for a sin. Under our sins are idolatrous desires.⁴⁵

Because idolatry is the essence of sin, according to Keller, the Ten Commandments start with the prohibition against idolatry: “The fundamental motivation behind lawbreaking is idolatry. We never break the other commandments without breaking the first one.”⁴⁶

The extent of sin. Keller holds that sin is a universal problem of humanity.

Everyone has the inner resistance to God’s lordship. All people strive to put themselves in the place of God. The Bible confirms humanity’s universal sinfulness (Eccl 7:20; Prov 20:9; Ps 14:3). In a sermon titled, “The Sin Beneath Sins,” Keller explains a passage from the third chapter of Romans, in which Paul argues for the universality of sin. Keller notes,

As Paul puts it in Romans 3:23, “There is no difference. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” In other words, moral and immoral people, religious people and people with false religions, heretical religions, or no religion, are all absolutely. . . . Paul says there is no difference. They are at the very same moral and spiritual situation. Their status morally and spiritually before God is the same. There’s no difference. Not one is a little better than the other, but they all fall short. No difference The first plank in the gospel is you cannot do what virtually everybody else does. You cannot divide the world into two groups, good and bad. You can’t divide the world like that. You mustn’t. All have sinned. [No difference.]⁴⁷

The universality of sin, according to Keller, is expressed in two ways of refusing to be centered on God. One is that men and women do not believe in God; they are going to do what they want to do. The other is that they are eager to be on the throne of their lives by obeying God completely; they are obeying the Lord to obtain control of God. Although

⁴⁵ Keller, “Preaching the Gospel to the Heart,” 11-12.

⁴⁶ Keller, *Counterfeit Gods*, 166. Keller elucidates idolatry in the OT and the NT, and suggests ways of identifying and displacing idols. See Timothy J. Keller, *Gospel in Life: Grace Changes Everything* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 36-49. Keller defines an idol as “anything more fundamental than God to your happiness, meaning in life, and identity.” Keller, “Preaching the Gospel to the Heart,” 11. This assertion implies that not only bad things, but even good things—such as a successful career or a happy family—can become idols. In this sense, Keller states, “We think that idols are bad things, but that is almost never the case. The greater the good, the more likely we are to expect that it can satisfy our deepest needs and hopes. Anything can serve as a counterfeit god, especially the very best things in life.” Keller, *Counterfeit Gods*, xix.

⁴⁷ Timothy J. Keller, “The Sin Beneath Sins” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, November 28, 1999), Logos Bible Software.

these two ways look totally different from each other, they are identical in terms of putting humanity in the place of God.⁴⁸

The nature of sin. Keller observes that the detrimental problem is not just human beings' universal sinfulness, but the denial of their sinfulness. Phrasing it differently, individuals are insensitive to their radical dislocation in the heart, so that they do not realize how sinful they are. Keller claims that sinners, who are blind to their sinfulness, require God's intervention. He expounds on people's hopeless condition and the Lord's intervention by discussing the second chapter of Jeremiah. Keller comments,

Sin is by essence denial. Sin is denial. Look at the language he uses. "Consider then and realize how evil and bitter it is for you" See that? "Consider then and realize how evil and bitter it is for you" Do you know what this language is? This is intervention language. . . . What does that mean? "Consider." You're not thinking. "Realize." You don't get it. You don't see what your problem is. You don't realize what the source of the evil and bitterness of your life is. You don't see it. You don't get it. You have to see it. This is the language of intervention, the language of pleading. In other words, what we learn from this verse, what we learn from this passage, what we learn from the Bible The root of our problems is the force field of denial that sin always entails. . . . It is not fatal to be a sinner. It's not being a sinner that's fatal, according to the Bible. It's the denial that you're a sinner that's fatal.⁴⁹

Keller clarifies that the root of the problem of humans is that they do not admit they are sinners.

The power of sin. Keller maintains sin has power over humanity, remarking that "sin brings a slavery."⁵⁰ Sin exerts its power of making even good things for self-reliant life with no reference to God. A natural desire for food, sex, and comfort and a normal desire for competence, love, and power can be turned into bondage under the influence of the power of sin.⁵¹ Keller thus elucidates sin as slavery, observing that

⁴⁸ Keller, "The Sin Beneath Sins."

⁴⁹ Keller, "Anatomy of Sin—Part 1."

⁵⁰ Keller, "Anatomy of Sin—Part 2."

⁵¹ Timothy J. Keller, "Alive with Christ—Part 1" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church,

when you sin with the mind, that sin shrivels the rationality. When you sin with the heart or the emotions, that sin shrivels the emotions. When you sin with the will, that sin destroys and dissolves your willpower and your self-control. Sin is the suicidal action of the self against itself. Sin destroys freedom. Sin is an enslaving power. Sin shrivels us up.⁵²

This citation shows that when a man commits sins, they do not disappear; they continue having effects on his life. He is in the bondage of sin. Keller mentions that “[sins] take shape and assume an actual consciousness, almost, an intelligence, a presence, and a being in your life.”⁵³ In this sense, under the power of sin, all sinners are powerless to be centered on God’s throne. They are spiritually helpless to do the right thing.

The consequences of sin. Keller asserts that God’s wrath and divine judgment against sin are the consequences of sin: “What draws God’s anger is godlessness and wickedness. The first speaks to a disregard of God’s rights, a destruction of our vertical relationship with him. The second refers to a disregard of human rights to love, truth, justice, a destruction of horizontal relationships with those around us.”⁵⁴ Expressing it in a different manner, all human beings are facing the wrath of God; sinners are, by nature, children of wrath.⁵⁵ This divine judgment occurs because God, having created all human beings, placed them in the world and held them accountable for their sin and sins.⁵⁶ Sinners’ most serious problem is that they deserve the Lord’s wrath.⁵⁷

New York, November 1, 1992), Logos Bible Software.

⁵² Keller, “Sin as Slavery.”

⁵³ Timothy J. Keller, “Cain and Abel” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, July 12, 1998), Logos Bible Software.

⁵⁴ Timothy J. Keller, *Romans 1-7 for You* (Purcellville, VA: Good Book, 2014), 26.

⁵⁵ Timothy J. Keller, “The Work of God” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, November 29, 1992), Logos Bible Software.

⁵⁶ Timothy J. Keller, “Why Doesn’t Life Make Sense? His Justice” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, October 25, 1992), Logos Bible Software.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Christ

Keller elucidates Christ in terms of his substitutionary atonement and perfect life.

Substitutionary atonement. Keller contends that Jesus took the cup of God's wrath against sinners by laying down his life on the cross as a substitutionary sacrifice (Gal 3:13; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 3:18; and Mark 10:45). In his sermon titled, "The Wrath of God," Keller articulates how the Lord's judicial hostility against transgression and injustice is described in a cup:

[The word *cup*] means wrath. In ancient times, sometimes you executed criminals by giving them a cup of poison. That's how they executed Socrates. They would give a criminal a cup of poison. In Ezekiel 23 it says, "You shall drink the cup of his wrath, of ruin and desolation, and you will tear your breasts." You know, the person who drinks the poison, they stagger and their insides are burning up. Or Isaiah 54 says, "You will drink the cup of his fury and you will stagger". . . . On the cross he's doing what he says he's doing, drinking the cup of wrath, he's actually fulfilling what Caiaphas prophesied about without knowing it. Caiaphas was just saying, "We'd better squash this guy so the Romans don't come down on us. That man should die, that we live." Caiaphas didn't realize what he was talking about. He was actually pointing to substitutionary atonement, which means Jesus Christ coming in as a substitute, taking the wrath of God, paying the price, and bearing the punishment.⁵⁸

Because the Bible reads, "The wages of sin are death" (Rom 6:23), Keller believes that humanity is under God's wrath. Christ's death on the cross implies that Jesus took divine judgment in sinners' place. In other words, in sinners' stead, Christ endured the death that sinners deserve.⁵⁹ Keller summarizes the meaning of substitutionary atonement:

[You] can understand all of life and all of the Bible in terms of the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Sin is you and me substituting ourselves for God, being our own bosses, acting as if we're in charge, but salvation is God substituting himself for us, putting himself where only we deserve. In Jesus Christ, God came and put himself on the cross, and he paid our penalty. He was made unclean so you could be made clean. He was cut off so you could have his everlasting name.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Timothy J. Keller, "The Wrath of God" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, April 3, 2011), Logos Bible Software.

⁵⁹ Timothy J. Keller, "The Meaning of His Death" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, January 14, 2007), Logos Bible Software.

⁶⁰ Timothy J. Keller, "Converted by the Cross" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New

Justice and love of God, according to Keller, are satisfied in the substitutionary atonement of Christ. Although the Lord creates humans to love them, he judges people for sin in them. He cannot accept sin or evil because so doing would violate his just and righteous character. However, for God, to judge human beings destroys the objects of his love. Jesus Christ's substitutionary sacrifice has solved this dilemma. Keller maintains, "On the cross, and only on the cross, the love and standards of God perfectly and brilliantly coincide and shine forth together. Jesus was smitten to satisfy the justice of God since that stroke paid for sins, and yet at the same time he was smitten to satisfy the love of God, since that stroke secured our salvation."⁶¹

In addition, from Keller's perspective, God's justice and love are not opposing values. Keller contends that because sin and evil destroy human beings whom the Lord loves and makes, he is furious about sin and evil. Putting it differently, God is outraged because he is love and filled with goodness. Keller explains, "If he wasn't filled with love and goodness, he wouldn't care. So the more loving you are, the easier you get angry, and the easier you get angry at sin and wrongdoing and things that are destroying the things you love. To pit love and justice against each other is silly."⁶² In other words, Keller holds that there is no contradiction between the Lord's wrath and love.

Perfect life. Because Jesus, according to Keller, lived a perfect or sinless life, his perfect life earned the blessings of obedience. Keller claims that Christ lived a flawless life before God. He loved God with his all heart, soul, and mind. Additionally, he loved his neighbor as himself (Matt 22:37-40).⁶³ In other words, Jesus lived just as

York, November 16, 2003), Logos Bible Software.

⁶¹ Timothy J. Keller, "The Law and the Christian" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, January 25, 1998), Logos Bible Software.

⁶² Timothy J. Keller, "By the Blood of Jesus Christ" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, March 15, 2009), Logos Bible Software.

⁶³ Timothy J. Keller, "Suffering and Glory" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New

other ordinary people did, but his life was totally different from that of others because he never sinned against God. He always obeyed all of God's law completely.⁶⁴ In the sermon titled, "Finding Our Identity in Christ," Keller describes the impeccable life of Jesus by employing the example of Christ's baptism:

The Bible says, not only did Jesus come and pay what you should have paid, but he performed what you should have performed. He lived a perfect life, with a perfect moral record for you. Do you remember the place where John the Baptist was about to baptize Jesus? He looked at Jesus and said, "Wait a minute. I baptize you? This is ridiculous." Jesus looked up to John and said, "Go ahead. It is absolutely necessary that we fulfill all righteousness." Do you see how this word keeps popping up and how you can't understand the Bible and Christianity unless you get a grip on it? ". . . fulfill all righteousness" What does he mean? He means, "I am here to be the perfect man. I'm here to live a life of perfect humanity. I must do everything God requires."⁶⁵

Christ's perfect life is supported by other biblical references, as well. Peter says in 1 Peter 2:22, "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." The writer of Hebrews affirms the flawlessness of Jesus by saying, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin" (Heb 4:15). Therefore, it can be argued that Christ fulfilled all human obligations to God, so that he held all blessings of obedience.

Faith

Keller explains faith in terms of the cause, the nature, its relationship with repentance, and its results.

York, February 17, 2013), Logos Bible Software.

⁶⁴ Timothy J. Keller, "Who Is Jesus?," *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed October 12, 2017, https://www.redeemer.com/skeptics_welcome/who_is_jesus.

⁶⁵ Timothy J. Keller, "Finding Our Identity in Christ—Part 1" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, October 29, 1989), Logos Bible Software.

The cause of faith. Keller contends that God’s grace takes the initiative of human salvation, stating that “the cause of faith is grace.”⁶⁶ He elucidates grace as the cause of faith by articulating Ephesians 2:8, in which Paul asserts, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.” Keller maintains that grace is “the material cause” and that faith is “the instrumental cause of Christianity.” The meaning of “it is by grace you have been saved, through faith,” according to Keller, is that God’s grace makes a sinner a Christian. Faith is just a way of receiving salvation or a channel for it.⁶⁷ His assertion implies that human faith itself cannot be a meritorious work or a ground of salvation. Faith is a response to what has already been done in Christ. Faith does not even exist without God’s grace. Keller goes on to say, “If this is true that the real cause you are a Christian is grace and the faith is just a channel, that means the cause of your faith is God’s grace, not that the cause of God’s grace is your faith.”⁶⁸ His statement clarifies that grace comes prior to faith.

The nature of faith. The understanding of faith is significant in that, through faith, Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice and his perfect life affect sinners. Keller declares,

Jesus is God himself come to Earth. He first lived a perfect life He lived the life you owed—a perfect record. Then, instead of receiving his deserved reward (eternal life), Jesus gave his life as a sacrifice for our sins, taking the punishment and death each of us owed. When we believe in him: 1) our sins are paid for by his death, and 2) his perfect life record is transferred to our account. So God accepts and regards us as if we have done all Christ has done.⁶⁹

Salvation is bestowed upon sinners when they believe in Jesus. According to Keller, this salvation includes both forgiveness and justification. Forgiveness means that those who

⁶⁶ Timothy J. Keller, “Faith and Grace” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, December 6, 1992), Logos Bible Software.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Keller, “How Can I Know God?”

believe in Christ are free from the liability to punishment. Justification implies that Christians have “the bestowal of a status” that guarantees all the rights and privileges of God’s family.⁷⁰

The nature of faith or saving faith, according to Keller, is placing one’s trust in Jesus Christ alone.⁷¹ Resting in Christ does not mean that a person has intellectual assent on Jesus Christ or believes what he did in general, but that one transfers his or her trust away from himself or herself and puts trust in Jesus Christ.⁷² Keller notes, “The faith that saves you is resting in Christ. It means . . . your salvation is not of works. Saving faith is not faith in general. It’s resting in Christ. It’s knowing your worthiness . . . your strength, and your salvation [are] not of works, not of your own effort, not of your own record, not of those things.”⁷³ In other words, placing trust in Christ does not depend on what an individual has done or ever will do, but on what Jesus has done in one’s place. That is, according to Keller, saving faith through which one is converted to a child of God, who is forgiven and justified in Christ.

The flip side of faith. Keller holds that faith and repentance are the same things, like two sides of the same coin: “Repent and believe. Those are not two different things; that’s one thing.”⁷⁴ Faith means that sinners are turning to Jesus by trusting Christ alone for their salvation; repentance implies that sinners are turning away from sin and do not rely on themselves for their salvation. Wayne Grudem also affirms an inseparable

⁷⁰ Timothy J. Keller, “Justified by Faith” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, March 8, 2009), Logos Bible Software.

⁷¹ Timothy J. Keller, “Faith in Jesus” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, January 26, 2003), Logos Bible Software.

⁷² Keller, *Center Church*, 58.

⁷³ Keller, “Faith and Grace.”

⁷⁴ Timothy J. Keller, “Signs of the King” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, August 13, 1989), Logos Bible Software.

relationship between faith and repentance: “Turning from sins in a genuine way is impossible apart from a genuine turning to God.”⁷⁵ To highlight the oneness between faith and repentance, Keller combines them into “repentant faith.”⁷⁶

Keller contends that saving faith is identical with “gospel-repentance,” not with “religious repentance.” He differentiates “gospel-repentance” or repentance from “religious repentance.”⁷⁷ Keller explains it is solely God’s grace that makes it possible for sinners to have “gospel-repentance.” This fact means that sinners need God’s grace, through which they realize both “emotional poverty” and “emotional wealth.” “Emotional poverty,” according to Keller, means that to truly repent, sinners should admit their guilt for what they have done and their hopeless condition, in which they cannot make it right by their own works. Moreover, they possess the confidence of “emotional wealth,” which implies they find hope in the Lord’s mercy and love. Without the assurance of God’s unfailing love, which prevents sinners from rationalizing their awful sins, it is too dreadful for them to admit “emotional poverty.” Keller observes, “It is not really possible to be honest about how sinful you are unless you have the confidence that God [still] loves you.”⁷⁸

The result of faith. Keller claims that saving faith results in good works, noting,

⁷⁵ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 716.

⁷⁶ Keller, “Signs of the King.”

⁷⁷ Timothy J. Keller, “All of Life Is Repentance,” *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed October 23, 2017, http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/All_of_Life_Is_Repentance-Keller.pdf. Keller presents three characteristics of religious repentance. First of all, it is selfish because people repent of their sin to avoid its results or punishment of them. Second, it is self-righteous. Individuals make repentance “a form of self-flagellation,” in which they persuade God that they deserve to be forgiven because of their genuinely regretful heart. Finally, it is “bitter all the way down.” People make a full effort to live perfectly moral lives for the Lord to receive blessings from him. Thus, it is extremely terrifying that they find themselves committing and repenting of their sins because they might lose their own blessings. In this situation, their lives are under great pressure “because their only hope is their moral goodness.” *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Keller, “Preaching the Gospel to the Heart,” 5.

“We’re saved by faith alone, but not by a faith that remains alone.”⁷⁹ This assertion implies that people are saved by faith alone, but proved to be saved by their works. Expressing it differently, if individuals, who argue that they have faith in Christ, do not show life-changing repentance, their faith is not living, real, or saving faith. On the basis of James 2:14-26, Keller articulates the necessity for good works caused by living faith:

It’s a life in which there’s no life and vitality in your faith. If your faith is dead, it won’t bear fruit. Dead things don’t grow. Dead things don’t reproduce, but living things do. So [James] goes on and says, “if your faith is alive it will produce this fruit.” Here are the two things. First of all, he says the sign of a living faith is it’s alive toward other people Ultimately, the sign of a living faith is it’s alive to God Look at Abraham. Abraham was considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar. You see, then, he was called God’s friend [James] says true faith wants friendship with God. True faith longs for God.⁸⁰

In Keller’s understanding, individuals with living faith in Jesus Christ will and should produce the fruit of Holy Spirit-empowered good works to people and God just like the type of fruit on a tree is a result of what kind the tree is.⁸¹

The Gospel for Renewing Creation

Keller states that the gospel for renewing creation highlights the question, “What hope is there for the world?” The answer can be outlined: creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.⁸²

⁷⁹ Timothy J. Keller, “Life of Faith” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, January 21, 1996), Logos Bible Software.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Keller maintains the necessity of mercy ministry, saying that mercy to people in need “is not optional or an addition to being a Christian. Rather, a life poured out in deeds of mercy is the inevitable sign of true faith.” Timothy J. Keller, *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015), 35.

⁸² Keller, *Center Church*, 32.

Creation

When Keller articulates God's creation, he focuses on the goodness of and the stewardship of creation.

The goodness of creation. Keller argues for the goodness of creation: "The Bible [teaches] the goodness of creation."⁸³ According to him, the goodness of creation is based on two matters. First, Keller contends that creation is good because God created a good world and declared it to be so.⁸⁴ The Scripture includes five times that "God saw it was good" (Gen 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25). After the Lord completed his creation of humans, the Bible reads, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Gen 1:31). The Scripture's description about God's creation, according to Keller, affirms the goodness of creation. He remarks that "the Bible has such a high view and a positive view of material creation."⁸⁵ Second, Keller maintains that God's creation is good because it comes from the Lord and is a reflection on God, who is ultimately good. He comments,

God is omniscient, so God wasn't making something the way we do and then standing back and saying, "Whatcha know, that's good!" No, he knows [creation is] good; he's enjoying it. He's not discovering it's good; he's enjoying it because it reflects his goodness Psalm 19 and other places say, "The heavens are telling the glory of God. The sun, the stars, the mountains, the hills are praising God." Now, what is that? Is that sort of poetic hyperbole? No. The point is, if it's true the creation reflects the very goodness of God, if it's a kind of reflection of the beauty and wonder of God in some way just like the art of an artist reflects something in the inner being of the artist, that means the way a tree praises God is by just being a tree. The grandeur of a tree shows us something of the grandeur of God. That's what Psalm 19 is saying.⁸⁶

Based on the two reasons, Keller strongly disagrees not only with Eastern religions, which describe this world as unreal, but additionally with Western religions

⁸³ Timothy J. Keller, "Can Faith Be Green?" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, November 16, 2008), Logos Bible Software.

⁸⁴ Timothy J. Keller, "The First Word" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, November 23, 2008), Logos Bible Software.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Keller, "Can Faith Be Green?"

that argue for dualism.⁸⁷ In dualism, there is a clear distinction between higher elements and lower elements. In this worldview, the higher realm is divine, virtuous, or good, while the lower realm is bad or evil; consequently, the world is intrinsically evil.⁸⁸ If God declared his creation good, and if the world was created by good God, though, his creation cannot be inherently evil.

The stewardship of creation. Keller believes that humanity was created to cultivate creation under God's lordship.⁸⁹ Based on Genesis 1:28 and 2:15, the stewardship of creation, according to Keller, has been given to man and woman, who are bearers of God's image. He declares,

Man's first mission was to subdue and have dominion over the earth (Gen 1:28). Genesis 2:15 restates this commission in terms of "tending and keeping" the garden of God. The concept of man as a gardener is highly suggestive: a gardener does not destroy nature, nor leave it as it is. He cultivates and develops it, enhancing its beauty, usefulness, and fruitfulness. So God expects his servants to bring all creation under his lordship.⁹⁰

In Paradise, God expected humanity to rule over the earth according to the will of the Lord, who created the world to be an interwoven and interdependent place of shalom and harmony.⁹¹ Keller articulates the perfect and harmonious state of shalom in God's creation: "God did not just simply make the world by throwing millions and billions of little entities into it, but God made the world and put all those millions and billions of entities into it to be beautifully, interdependently, harmoniously knit together . . . that

⁸⁷ Keller, "The First Word."

⁸⁸ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 346.

⁸⁹ Keller, *Gospel in Life*, 128.

⁹⁰ Keller, *Ministries of Mercy*, 41.

⁹¹ Keller, *The Reason for God*, 176-77.

interdependence is what the Bible calls *shalom*” (emphasis in original).⁹² Man and woman could maintain shalom in the Garden of Eden by working and obeying faithfully.

Fall

Keller claims that because human beings sinned against the Lord, they lost God’s shalom spiritually, psychologically, socially, and physically.⁹³ As a result, people are in bondage in every area of their lives. They cannot experience freedom for all the things that God designed them to be.⁹⁴

Broken relationship with God. Keller insists that sin separated humanity from God. According to Keller, before the fall Adam and Eve walked with God in the garden, while after the fall they ran away from the Lord (Gen 3:8). Based on the fact that the word *walking* in Hebrew is an idiom that implies fellowship and intimacy, Keller delineates that Adam and Even possessed an intimate relationship with the Lord, but experienced fear in the presence of God after the fall. They avoided the Lord God by hiding themselves from the Creator, who wanted to have a relationship with them.⁹⁵ Keller summaries this tragedy: “Adam, who was to protect the garden for God, now must seek to protect himself from God with the garden. Here is the beginning of the great reversal.”⁹⁶

⁹² Timothy J. Keller, “Creation Care and Justice” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, January 16, 2005), Logos Bible Software.

⁹³ Keller, *The Reason for God*, 177.

⁹⁴ Timothy J. Keller, “The Cosmic Spirit” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, September 12, 2010), Logos Bible Software.

⁹⁵ Timothy J. Keller, “Paradise Lost” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, January 18, 2009), Logos Bible Software.

⁹⁶ Timothy J. Keller, “Ministries of Mercy” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, March 24, 1991), 47-48, Logos Bible Software.

Keller states that humanity's broken relationship with God has effects beyond humanity.⁹⁷ The world was made for God's glory, and the Lord assigned humanity a mission of caring for it to manifest God's glory. As a result, Adam and Eve should assume dominion over creation under God's lordship. However, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, sin entered humanity and the world, which means that sin affects not merely human beings, but the world and the cosmos, as well.⁹⁸ In this sense, Keller contends, "All this natural and moral evil is understood as stemming from the foundational rupture of our relationship with God."⁹⁹

Broken relationship with self. Keller holds that human beings' loss of fellowship with God resulted in their broken relationships with themselves on the basis of Genesis 3:10: "He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.'" Because nakedness is an idiom for a sense of guilt or a sense of shame, Genesis 3:10, according to Keller, clarifies humans' fallen condition that is a lack of ease with who they are. Due to their uneasiness concerning their identity, human beings make a full effort to prove themselves or cover who they truly are. They strive to prevent other people from seeing who they are. They do not want to admit and show the worst regarding themselves.¹⁰⁰ For this reason, humanity experiences all kinds of psychological problems, such as "unhappiness, guilt, fear, loss of personal identity, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, suicide, sexual problems."¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Timothy J. Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering* (New York: Penguin, 2015), 131.

⁹⁸ Chandler, *The Explicit Gospel*, 111.

⁹⁹ Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*, 131.

¹⁰⁰ Keller, "Paradise Lost."

¹⁰¹ Keller, *Ministries of Mercy*, 49.

Broken relationship with others. Keller asserts that when Adam and Eve’s relationship with the Lord was destroyed, their relationship with each other was ruined, too. As soon as sin entered Adam and Eve, they covered themselves up by sewing fig leaves together (Gen 3:7). Sin, according to Keller, made Adam and Eve hide not only from God, but from each other.¹⁰² Their broken relationship with each other was unambiguous in Genesis 3:11-12, in which Adam shifted the blame to Eve. Keller insists that fallen humans are at war with one another, so that people experience “interpersonal conflicts, marital and family problems, poverty, class struggle, constant political confrontation.”¹⁰³ According to Keller, all of these social problems stem from sin against the Lord.

Broken relationship with nature. Keller explains that human beings’ sin devastated their relationship with nature. Due to humans’ sin, God’s curse was on the ground, so that humanity should work painfully to eat (Gen 3:17, 19).¹⁰⁴ This fact means that—after the fall—human beings no longer fully assumed dominion over nature, which reluctantly produced some of its riches for humanity. Men and women should make a full effort to have food from it.¹⁰⁵ Keller points out a drastically changed relationship between humanity and nature: “once a ‘friend’, under our dominion, the natural world is not hostile to us.”¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, Keller asserts that because humans are fallen, nature is

¹⁰² Keller, “Paradise Lost.”

¹⁰³ Keller, *Ministries of Mercy*, 51.

¹⁰⁴ Keller, “Paradise Lost.”

¹⁰⁵ Keller, *Ministries of Mercy*, 52.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

additionally fallen in some degree and is groaning.¹⁰⁷ Based on Romans 8:19-21, Keller elucidates the fallen state of nature:

Paul actually speaks about the creation groaning, this material world, not just us groaning. We do too, but our material environment, the world itself, is groaning. It says it's groaning because it's crushed under a bondage to decay and to frustration. What does that mean? It means everything, not just us suffering, in this world is steadily, irreversibly, inexorably, unavoidably falling apart, wearing down, wearing out, giving out.¹⁰⁸

Nature is marred to some extent. The condition of nature is not what it should be in God's creation. It is not how the Lord meant it to be.¹⁰⁹

Redemption

Keller considers Jesus Christ's death and the resurrection as central for God's redemption by contending that when the relationship with God is made right through Christ, other relationships with self, others, and nature can be redeemed.¹¹⁰ Thus, to have hope for redemption, Keller maintains that people should comprehend and believe in the cross first.¹¹¹

Focusing on Jesus Christ. Keller states that Jesus experienced "cosmic hopelessness" on the cross.¹¹² To articulate the significance of Christ's death on the cross, Keller explains Revelation 21:6: "To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life." The thirsty, according to Keller, can be satisfied with living

¹⁰⁷ Keller, "Can Faith Be Green?"

¹⁰⁸ Timothy J. Keller, "Groaning in the Spirit" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, December 10, 2006), Logos Bible Software.

¹⁰⁹ Keller, "The Cosmic Spirit."

¹¹⁰ Timothy J. Keller, "Creation, Fall, Redemption—and Your Money," *Gospel in Life*, accessed November 9, 2017, <http://www.gospelinlife.com/creation-fall-redemption-and-your-money>.

¹¹¹ Timothy J. Keller, "The New Heaven and New Earth" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, April 12, 2009), Logos Bible Software.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

water through Christ's thirst on the cross: "On the cross, Jesus Christ was experiencing the cosmic thirst that we deserve so we can have the water of life without price."¹¹³ He regards Jesus Christ's words on the cross, "I thirst," as referring not just to a physical thirst, but as "the cosmic thirst" that human beings should experience due to their sin. In other words, humanity's sin results in the fall (broken God's shalom), but "the substitutionary hopelessness of Jesus" enables humans to have hope for redemption of God's wholistic shalom. This principle means that, for Keller, Jesus Christ's death as a substitutionary sacrifice is the first foundation of redemption.

According to Keller, Christ's resurrection is the second foundation for redemption. Keller concentrates on the resurrection because resurrected Jesus is the first-fruits of redemption and restoration. He continues, "[Jesus] didn't just die, he was raised again Jesus is the beginning, newness of life, new body He is the first fruits and the first installment."¹¹⁴ In addition, Keller highlights that the resurrected Jesus on the throne is making everything new (Rev 21:5), attesting Christ redeems not only the human spirit, but the human body and material world, as well.¹¹⁵ In other words, Keller argues that through the resurrected Jesus Christ, humanity and this world are being and can be redeemed.¹¹⁶

Restoration

Keller contends that the King of the universe, Jesus Christ, will come to restore all those who have been decimated by the fall. Phrasing it differently, the purpose of

¹¹³ Keller, "The New Heaven and New Earth."

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Keller, "Creation, Fall, Redemption—and Your Money."

Christ's arrival is fulfilling the perfect restoration from all results of the fall: spiritual, psychological, social, and physical.¹¹⁷

Wholistic salvation. Keller argues for wholistic salvation based on his understanding of shalom.¹¹⁸ Keller describes that shalom is much more than peace. According to him, it implies complete reconciliation, which is “a state of the fullest flourishing in every dimension—physical, emotional, social, and spiritual—because all relationships are right, perfect, and filled with joy.”¹¹⁹ If the result of the fall destroyed harmonious peace in God's creation, his salvation in this world is reestablishing shalom. In other words, in Keller's view, an aim of salvation is not just saving sinners, but restoring the Lord's shalom fully that he intended in his creation.

Keller maintains that the wholistic salvation from all kinds of evil is alluded to in Genesis 3:21: “The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.” The Lord filled Adam and Eve's psychological need for privacy and physical requirement for safety because the natural environment was hostile to them. Keller thinks that providing them with garments from animal skins seems to be a shadow of the sacrificial system, especially Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross, considering the context of enmity between the serpent and the woman and between its offspring and hers (Gen 3:15). Keller, therefore, argues for wholistic salvation: “[What this passage is saying? God] says, ‘someday I'm going to have to give salvation, but my salvation is holistic. You need forgiveness. You also need shelter from the stormy blast.’”¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Keller, *Center Church*, 35.

¹¹⁸ Timothy J. Keller, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 173-80.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 173-74.

¹²⁰ Keller, “Paradise Lost.” In this sermon, Keller cites and accepts Derek Kidder's assertion of the necessity of social concern. In his commentary pertaining to Genesis, Kidder holds that “the coats of skins are forerunners of the welfare, both spiritual and physical, which man's sin makes necessary.”

Additionally, Keller claims that the final restoration will be fulfilled when the new heavens and the new earth come down to earth. Jesus will end evil, suffering, decay, and death, which means that the Lord—not humanity—will complete the new heavens and the new earth. God is the only one who can make the world the Garden of Eden again.¹²¹ Expressing it a different way, the New Jerusalem is not built by human beings from the ground up; it will come down out of heaven from the Lord (Rev 21:2). Believers will not be able to accomplish the ultimate restoration with their own efforts.¹²²

Keller holds that Christians should resist the results of the fall. The fact that God is the one who completes the final restoration does not mean that Christians should just wait for the arrival of Jesus pessimistically, but that they should fight against the results of the fall.¹²³ Christ’s incarnation and God’s final restoration, according to Keller, implies that the Lord cares about this material world and wants to put a final end to all evil, suffering, and decay.¹²⁴ Hence, Keller asserts that Christians should turn the effects of the fall down in their daily life. He justifies the reason they should withstand the consequences of the fall by expounding John 11, in which Jesus restored the life of Lazarus. Keller comments,

When Jesus Christ in John 8 says, “. . . before Abraham was, I am,” he actually says, “I am God.” He takes a divine name. Then in chapter 11, he’s standing in front of the tomb of his friend Lazarus, who has just died of the plague or of disease. So he claims to be God. He’s standing before a man who has just died of the plague, and the Bible says he’s angry. In fact the Greek actually says he was furious. He was furious at death. . . . Do you see what that means? Jesus Christ, who says he’s God, can be mad at the plague and still not mad at himself because he knows this

Therefore, social action could not have had an earlier or more exalted inauguration.” Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1967), 77.

¹²¹ Timothy J. Keller, “Hope That Transforms” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, February 20, 2014), Logos Bible Software.

¹²² Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?* 93.

¹²³ Timothy J. Keller, “The Garden—City of God” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, April 26, 2009), Logos Bible Software.

¹²⁴ Keller, “Hope That Transforms.”

isn't the way it's supposed to be. The fact is, Jesus Christ came to die on the cross so someday he could end the plague. He could end evil. He could end sin. He could forgive us for our sins and someday end all evil, so someday he could end evil without ending us. He died for us so someday he could end all this without ending us. Therefore, because we believe in the fallenness of creation, we can fight it.¹²⁵

In this sense, when Christians see those who are in extreme poverty and who are suffering from physical abuse, the believers, who are walking in line with God, are passionate about caring for them.¹²⁶ They should resist the outcome of the sin.

Keller's Understanding of the Gospel

Keller argues that there is only one gospel, and yet the gospel is put in different forms, saying that “there must be one gospel, and yet there are clearly different forms in which one gospel can be expressed.”¹²⁷ He states that John and the Synoptics have the same understanding of the gospel, though John and the Synoptics possess two distinct forms of the gospel:

Readers have always noticed that the kingdom languages of the Synoptic Gospels are virtually missing in the gospel of John, which usually talks instead about receiving eternal life. However, when we compare Mark 10:17, 23-34, Matthew 25:34, 46, and John 3:5-6 and 16-17, we see that “entering the kingdom of God” and “receiving eternal life” are virtually the same thing. Reading Matthew 18:3, Mark 10:15, and John 3:3-5 together reveals that conversion, the new birth, and receiving the kingdom of God “as a child” are the same move.¹²⁸

According to Keller, John and the Synoptics employ different vocabulary because John accentuates individuals' inward dynamic in the kingdom of God, while the Synoptics emphasize corporate dynamic caused by the gospel. Phrasing it differently, Keller claims that the one gospel can be expressed in different forms—one highlighting the individual aspect of salvation, and the other stressing the corporate aspect of salvation.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Keller, “Can Faith Be Green?”

¹²⁶ Keller, “Hope That Transforms.”

¹²⁷ Timothy J. Keller, “The Gospel in All Its Forms,” *Gospel in Life*, 1, accessed September 28, 2017, <http://www.gospelinlife.com/the-gospel-in-all-its-forms>.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁹ Keller, *Center Church*, 39. Greg Gilbert concurs with Keller's assertion about simply one

Keller defines the gospel as the good news that “through the person and work of Jesus Christ, God fully accomplishes salvation for us, rescuing us from judgment for sin into fellowship with him, and then restores the creation in which we can enjoy our new life together with him forever.”¹³⁰ Moreover, he defines the gospel in a different expression: “God has entered the world in Jesus Christ to achieve a salvation that we could not achieve for ourselves which now 1) converts and transforms individuals, forming them into a new humanity, and eventually 2) will renew the whole world and all creation. This is the ‘good news’—The gospel.”¹³¹

These gospel definitions demonstrate that the gospel for saving individuals¹³² and the gospel for renewing creation¹³³ are interwoven into Keller’s understanding of the gospel. This principle implies that Keller considers these two gospel aspects as a necessary understanding of the same gospel. In addition, no conflict exists between the

gospel, saying that “there is only one gospel, not two.” Gilbert argues that the NT writers do not have any problem “zooming in and out on” the same gospel. According to Gilbert, they sometimes focus on forgiveness through Jesus Christ and call it gospel, whereas they underline whole restoration and call that gospel, too. Gilbert terms the narrow sense “the gospel of the cross” and the broad sense “the gospel of the kingdom.” Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 106-7. Matt Chandler names the narrow sense “the gospel of the ground” and the broad sense “the gospel in the air,” but believes in the existence of just one gospel. The relationship between these two are complementary because they show “the same redemptive plan God has for the world in the work of his Son.” Chandler, *The Explicit Gospel*, 15-17, 175.

¹³⁰ Keller, “The Gospel in All Its Forms,” 2.

¹³¹ Timothy J. Keller, “The Gospel—Key to Change,” *Cru*, accessed September 28, 2017, <https://www.cru.org/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/the-gospel-key-to-change.html>.

¹³² The gospel for individuals will be referred to as GFI. Keller calls this aspect of the gospel “grace-centered.” See Timothy J. Keller, “Five Ministry Fronts in the City,” *Gospel in Life*, 1, accessed January 13, 2018, <https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/five-ministry-fronts-in-the-city/>.

¹³³ The gospel for creation will be known as GFC. Keller calls GFC “kingdom-centered.” He articulates the meaning of the “kingdom-centered” gospel, saying, “Jesus is not ultimately saving individual souls by removing them from the world, but rather he is bringing the life and power of God down into the material world to eventually renew and restore it.” *Ibid.*

gospel for saving individuals and the gospel for renewing creation.¹³⁴ Rather, in his understanding, these two gospel aspects are well-harmonized toward the Lord's movement of saving work for both humanity and nature, which groan and wait eagerly for redemption (Rom 8:22-23). In other words, in Keller's view, both are needed to illustrate the size and the weight of God's redemptive work.¹³⁵

Keller contends that, although both are required, the gospel for saving individuals is primary: "I'll say that without [GFI], [GFC] is not the gospel."¹³⁶ This means that GFC is grounded in GFI and that, without this foundation of GFI, GFC cannot stand as the gospel. Simply proclaiming God's redemption and restoration, without telling sinners ways they may become partakers of the Lord's salvation, does not preach the gospel. It shares bad news—not good news—because listeners may acknowledge the restoration of the kingdom, but do not know that they can be heirs of the kingdom by repentance and faith in Christ. In this case, the kingdom has nothing to do with the hearers who are under God's wrath.¹³⁷

Keller delineates the danger of focusing solely on GFC.¹³⁸ According to him, the NT does not support this position. Those who highly stress GFC tend to define sins as social problems, such as racism, poverty, and materialism—as God's broken shalom. They urge Christians to participate in social justice and mercy ministry based on their

¹³⁴ Keller, *Center Church*, 40.

¹³⁵ Chandler agrees with Keller's argument by saying, "[I] hold the gospel on the ground and the gospel in the air as complementary, two views of the same redemptive plan God has for the world in the work of his Son." Chandler believes that individuals who do not hold these perspectives together fall into all kinds of biblical errors. Chandler, *The Explicit Gospel*, 175.

¹³⁶ Keller, *Center Church*, 32.

¹³⁷ DeYoung and Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, 108.

¹³⁸ Keller, *Center Church*, 32, 40. Moreover, Chandler articulates the dangers in overemphasizing GFC in his book. He contends that if Christians stick to the gospel for the world too tightly, they might fall into syncretism, possess a gospel without Christ, make culture an idol, and finally abandon evangelism. Chandler, *The Explicit Gospel*, 189-201.

assertion that “God is at work for restoring shalom in this world, so you can, too.”

According to Keller, emphasizing the gospel in terms of performing social reformation obscures the crucial understanding of the gospel that sinners are saved by grace alone—not by works. In other words, those who fall into danger confuse what the gospel is with what the gospel does. The gospel itself does not concern the way of life in the NT.¹³⁹

Keller clarifies that the gospel is not about the way of life on the basis of the usage of the word *gospel* in the NT:

Recently I studied all the places in the Greek Bible where forms of the word *gospel* were used, and I was overwhelmed by how often it denotes not a way of life—not what we do—but a verbal proclamation of what Jesus has done and how an individual gets right with God. Often people who talk about the good news as mainly doing peace and justice refer to it as “the gospel of the kingdom.” But to receive the kingdom as a little child (Mat 18:3) and to believe in Christ’s name and be born of God (John 1:12-13) are the same thing—it’s the way one becomes a Christian (John 3:3, 5).¹⁴⁰

Furthermore, Keller warns about the danger of exclusively emphasizing GFI.¹⁴¹ This perspective, according to Keller, makes Christianity too individualistic.¹⁴² Under the influence of Western ideas, some Christians think that the gospel has something to do only with individuals’ spiritual need for freedom from guilt and bondage. From this viewpoint, believers consider Christianity to be an escape from the world for their happiness. Consequently, for them, the gospel primarily appeals to personal benefits. Keller asserts, “Some conservative Christians think of the story of salvation as the fall, redemption, heaven. In this narrative, the purpose of redemption is

¹³⁹ Keller, “The Gospel in All Its Forms,” 2-3.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁴¹ Keller, *Center Church*, 32-33, 40. Furthermore, Chandler delineates a variety of dangers of this view and maintains that if Christians concentrate solely on the gospel for sinners, they might neglect God’s missional plan for the whole world, rationalize faith, remove authentic discipleship, and make the gospel too individualistic. Chandler, *The Explicit Gospel*, 175-88.

¹⁴² Keller, “The Gospel in All Its Forms,” 1.

an escape from this world; only saved people have anything of value.”¹⁴³ Keller’s contention demonstrates that the gospel is regarded as a wonderful plan for life—not for the world. As a result, this understanding of the gospel, according to Keller, results in ignoring the eschatological implications of the gospel rooted in the Bible.¹⁴⁴

He claims that Christians need to understand all aspects of the gospel in the process of evangelism and discipleship. This fact does not mean that Bible instructors should try and teach the full aspects of the gospel in a single gospel address. Even the NT writers, according to Keller, rarely teach all aspects of the gospel equally in any one gospel presentation. He explains, “[Paul] always leads some points rather than others in an effort to connect with the baseline cultural narratives of his listeners.”¹⁴⁵ For this reason, Keller asks pastors not to teach everything each time. Instead, he encourages pastors to preach expositionally to help Christians comprehend all aspects of the gospel: “If you are preaching expositionally, different passages will convey the different forms of the one gospel.”¹⁴⁶ In other words, Keller feels that expository preaching makes it possible for believers to learn all the points of the one gospel.¹⁴⁷ As a result, they can avoid falling into the dangers of GFI and GFC.

¹⁴³ Timothy J. Keller, “Our New Global Culture: Ministry in Urban Centers,” *Gospel in Life*, accessed November 14, 2017, <http://www.gospelinlife.com/our-new-global-culture-ministry-in-urban-centers>.

¹⁴⁴ Keller, “The Gospel in All Its Forms,” 3.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁴⁷ In his book *Preaching*, Keller admits the value of expository preaching and topical preaching, but highlights more the former than the latter: “Expository preaching should provide the main diet of preaching for a Christian community.” One of the reasons for his assertion is that expository preaching prevents a preacher from setting his agenda for a community. Putting it differently, expository preaching makes it difficult for a preacher to predetermine what he prefers to deal with. See Timothy J. Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 32-39.

Keller argues for the one gospel in various forms, mentioning that “the Bible presents one gospel in several forms.”¹⁴⁸ According to him, numerous Christians do not admit the oneness of the gospel because they want to ignore the other aspects of the gospel that they do not like. Keller divides those Christians into two groups. One type of Christians, who hold GFC tightly, ignore the gospel of atonement and justification. Other Christians tend to not admit that varied forms of the one gospel exist because they want to adhere just to GFI. Keller notes that these two groups both are not faithful to the statement of the Scriptures.¹⁴⁹

Conclusion

Keller argues that only one gospel exists in the Bible, although the gospel can be explained in various aspects. GFI and GFC are the same good news that “God has accomplished our salvation for us through Christ in order to bring us into a right relationship with him and eventually to destroy all the results of sin in the world.”¹⁵⁰ Keller clarifies two points with respect to the gospel. First of all, both GFI and GFC are necessary. Thus, the gospel, which requests that believers proclaim it to unbelievers, also requires them to assume such social responsibilities as mercy ministry and social justice. In addition, GFI is primary because GFC is rooted in GFI. GFC cannot stand alone as the gospel without GFI. This means that GFC should not replace GFI and be confused with GFI, and that social involvements without evangelism must not be at the center of the church. The upcoming chapter will show how his understanding of the gospel results in wholistic ministry: evangelism, discipleship, social justice, and cultural renewal.

¹⁴⁸ Keller, “The Gospel in All Its Forms,” 5.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Keller, *Center Church*, 31.

CHAPTER 4
THE DYNAMIC OF THE GOSPEL

Introduction

Timothy Keller maintains that the gospel should make a church conduct wholistic ministry. Many Christians have a tendency to concentrate either on *evangelism and discipleship*, or on *social justice and cultural engagement*. Generally, a conservative side of Christianity highlights the former and tends to de-emphasize the latter, while a liberal side of Christianity accentuates the latter and nearly neglects the former. Keller does not think that the common tendency is biblical because the gospel enables Christians to be passionate for both evangelism and discipleship *and*, simultaneously, social justice and cultural renewal. In other words, he claims that the gospel dynamic tears down the common tendency and creates wholistic ministry in a church.¹

The Good News of Grace

The radical grace of God manifested in the costly cross of Jesus is the reason why the gospel changes humanity from the inside out. Keller claims that the core of the gospel is the good news of gracious acceptance.² To clarify the gospel of gracious acceptance, he stresses that the gospel is not good advice, but the good news. A piece of advice is primarily appropriate to listeners' way of life, while the good news is closely connected to something that has been done for hearers. Keller attests,

¹ Timothy J. Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 291-92

² Timothy J. Keller, "The Gospel—Key to Change," *Cru*, accessed September 28, 2017, <https://www.cru.org/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/the-gospel-key-to-change.html>.

If that's at the very, very heart of the word gospel, if that's what the message is, the essence of the Christian message is news . . . good, joyful news . . . then this is the difference between the gospel and every other philosophy or religion. The gospel is not good advice about what you must do. It's primarily good news about what's already been done for you, something that's already happened. See, other religions say, "If you really want to meet God, do this, this, and this." It's good advice. Only Christianity is not good advice but primarily good news about something that's already been done for you. . . . One of the breakthroughs is to realize how utterly different Christianity is because it's good news, not good advice.³

Keller maintains that the good news of the gospel is based on usage of Greek terms.

According to him, in the Septuagint, the Greek term εὐαγγελίζω (*euangelizō*, proclaim good news) is generally utilized to announce news about people's deliverance from great dangers (Ps 40:9).⁴ D. A. Carson additionally affirms the nature of the gospel as the good news after examining the use of Greek terms εὐαγγέλιον (*euangelion*, good news), εὐαγγελίζω (*euangelizō*, proclaim good news), and εὐαγγελιστής (*euangelistēs*, one who proclaims good news) in the NT. He remarks, "Because the gospel is news. Good news . . . it is to be announced: that's what one does with news. The essentially heraldic element in preaching is bound up with the fact that the core message is not a code of ethics. . . . The gospel is the news of what God has done; it is not the stipulation that God requires."⁵

Keller accentuates the gospel as gracious acceptance by differentiating sharply between what the gospel is and what the gospel does.⁶ He distinguishes the gospel itself from its results and its implications. He articulates Galatians 2:11-16, in which Paul challenged Peter to his face because Peter stopped eating with Gentiles and separated himself from the Gentiles when some Jewish people sent from James came to Antioch.

³ Timothy J. Keller, "The Power of the Gospel" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, February 8, 2009), Logos Bible Software.

⁴ Keller, *Center Church*, 29.

⁵ D. A. Carson, "What Is the Gospel?—Revisited," in *For the Fame of God's Name: Essays in Honor of John Piper*, ed. Sam Storms and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 158-59.

⁶ Keller, *Center Church*, 30.

Those Jewish people, according to Keller, were not against belief in Christ; but their problem was adding something to belief in Christ. Keller observes,

They weren't against Christ. But they said you have to add to Jesus Christ, his work, his love. [This means that] faith and union with his work and his love are not enough to cleanse and beautify you. It's not enough. You have to believe in Christ, and you have to add something. . . . The important thing is not so much what they were adding, but that they were adding.⁷

Keller expounds the crucial difference between Paul and Jewish Christians through the logical order of three steps. This logical order is the causal order, about which the cause is and which the effect is. Paul's logical order is "believe, you're saved, and you obey"; the Jewish people's causal order is "believe, and obey, and you'll be saved."⁸ Paul's order means to believe in Jesus Christ, and at that time salvation takes place. Immediately after that, proceed to obey the law of God. By contrast, the circumcision group's order implies belief in Jesus Christ and following the law of God the best you can. After that, salvation occurs.

These two positions, according to Keller, are totally different from each other just like two different religions. This pivotal difference relies on whether or not Christ's work alone is sufficient to cleanse and beautify sinners. Jewish people would say, "No, it is not." Thus, they maintain that sinners have to do something to be saved. Opposing this position and following Paul's view, Keller argues, "Christ alone, Christ and nothing else, is enough to cleanse you to make you acceptable in God's sight. . . . So it's, 'Believe, saved, obey,' not 'Believe, obey, saved.'"⁹ Keller summarizes the whole point of the logical order of three steps: "Jesus Christ plus nothing is the gospel."¹⁰ This statement

⁷ Timothy J. Keller, "The Heart of the Gospel" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, November 9, 1997), Logos Bible Software.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Timothy J. Keller, "Centrality of the Gospel" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, November 2, 1997), Logos Bible Software.

clearly shows that the gospel is the good news about gracious salvation for sinners—not good advice about moral prerequisites for salvation.

The Two Foes of the Gospel

Keller presents two enemies of the gospel as ways of rejecting God: legalism and antinomianism.¹¹ Those who fall into legalism, just like Jewish Christians in Galatians 2, reject the Lord by following and obeying God’s law to earn their own salvation with their own power. By contrast, those who fall into antinomianism refuse God by rejecting his law and living their lives according to their preference, as well.¹² These two enemies greatly influence humanity because both foes are based on the natural propensity of the human heart and mind.¹³ The foes, according to Keller, pervert the gospel message and devitalize the power of the gospel; therefore, he holds that it is necessary for believers to make a sharp distinction between legalism, antinomianism, and the gospel.¹⁴

Legalism. Keller defines legalism as a belief that “faith plus works make you justified with God.”¹⁵ It highlights truth without grace, and the primary motivation for this belief is fear and pride.¹⁶ In legalism, people must exert their full efforts to obey

¹¹ In his sermons, articles, and books, Keller calls the two enemies of the gospel religion and irreligion; legalism and antinomianism; and moralism and relativism. This means that those terms are virtually interchangeable. The theological terms *legalism* and *antinomianism* are used in this dissertation, even though Keller uses other terms in his writings.

¹² Keller, *Center Church*, 63.

¹³ Timothy J. Keller, “The Centrality of the Gospel,” *NewCityIndy*, accessed September 21, 2017, <http://www.newcityindy.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/centrality-of-gospel.-keller.pdf>.

¹⁴ Keller, *Center Church*, 31.

¹⁵ Timothy J. Keller, “How a Gospel Movement Works,” *Redeemer City to City*, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://www.redeemercitytocity.com/blog/2017/11/14/how-a-gospel-movement-works>.

¹⁶ Timothy J. Keller, “Our New Global Culture: Ministry in Urban Centers,” *Gospel in Life*, 7, accessed November 14, 2017, <http://www.gospelinlife.com/our-new-global-culture-ministry-in-urban-centers>.

God's law out of fear. If they keep the divine standard, they will enjoy the Lord's blessings. If not, they will lose God's blessings.¹⁷ This concept implies that, in this framework, the moral righteousness of humanity determines salvation. Consequently, Keller contends that legalism makes individuals arrogant or despairing: "[Legalism] produces either superiority, if we've lived up to our standards, or inferiority if we haven't, but either way we are driven by radical insecurity."¹⁸ In other words, on the one hand, those who are following God's law feel superior and look down on those who are not doing so. These people present their moral righteousness to the Lord in an effort to show that God owes them salvation.¹⁹ On the other hand, those who are not living up to God's standards feel inferior and disdain themselves. They conduct their lives in bitterness, without grace and joy.²⁰

Keller maintains that, because legalism is "the basic default mode of the human heart," it is natural for believers to move from the gospel to legalism.²¹ Even the lives of professed atheists are based on legalism in the sense that they earn a sense of worth by following a set of social values and standards.²² Keller points out that, due to humanity's instinct of returning to legalism, believers are exposed to the great danger of returning to legalism too easily:

Christians who know the gospel in principle and who have been changed by it nevertheless continually revert to works-righteousness and self-salvation. . . . A basic insight of Martin Luther's was that "[legalism]" is the default mode of the human heart. Your computer operates automatically in default mode unless you

¹⁷ Timothy J. Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Penguin, 2009), 186.

¹⁸ Keller, "Our New Global Culture," 7.

¹⁹ Timothy J. Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 49.

²⁰ Keller, *The Reason for God*, 187.

²¹ Timothy J. Keller, "Preaching the Gospel to the Heart," *Squarespace*, 1, accessed November 1, 2017, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5315f2e5e4b04a00bc148f24/t/55e0c99ee4b0f4b11e1cf5c0/1440795038107/Preaching+the+Gospel+to+the+Heart.pdf>.

²² Keller, *Center Church*, 64.

deliberately tell it to do something else. Luther says that even after you are converted by the gospel, your heart will go back to operation on the [legalistic] principle unless you deliberately, repeatedly set it to gospel-mode.²³

Expressing it differently, although Christians believe the gospel at one level, at deeper levels they tend to live as if they have to save themselves by their works.²⁴ This huge influence of legalism on Christians, according to Keller, is the basic cause of such spiritual problems as uncontrolled emotions, conflict, lack of joy, and ministry ineffectiveness.²⁵

Antinomianism. Keller maintains that antinomianism highlights grace without truth.²⁶ This belief, according to him, claims that Christians do not need to obey God's law. The idea is based on the fact that the Lord accepts everyone, no matter how people live.²⁷ Keller notes, "It is the thought that since God loves me regardless of my record, he doesn't mind how morally or immorally I live. It's the attitude that 'God so accepts me as I am; he only wants me to be myself.'"²⁸ An error of antinomianism, according to Keller, is that those who fall into it are reluctant to say, "You ought," and are afraid to ask believers to obey God's laws.²⁹ Because of this danger, this view cannot lead believers to the depths of transformation.³⁰

²³ Timothy J. Keller, *Gospel in Life: Grace Changes Everything* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 18.

²⁴ Keller, *Center Church*, 64.

²⁵ Keller, *Gospel in Life*, 18.

²⁶ Keller, *Center Church*, 48.

²⁷ Keller, "How a Gospel Movement Works."

²⁸ Keller, *Preaching*, 50.

²⁹ Keller, *Center Church*, 48.

³⁰ Keller, "The Gospel—Key to Change."

The same root of the foes. Keller delineates that, although legalism and antinomianism look completely different, the basic root of both errors has the same mind-set: “They are in fact non-identical twins that emerge from the same womb.”³¹ First of all and most importantly, both legalism and antinomianism are based on a distorted understanding of God’s identity.³² Keller points out legalists’ incorrect view of God, stating that “legalism stems from the belief that we will have to pry blessing out of God’s begrudging, unwilling fingers with all sorts of observances and performances.”³³ According to Keller, legalists believe that the Lord is a demanding and holy God, who is appeased only by extraordinarily moral efforts.³⁴ In addition, Keller claims that antinomianism has the same perspective of the Lord, who is an ungenerous and hard God. From this viewpoint, God’s law is regarded not as given for humanity’s benefit, but as a hindrance to human freedom.³⁵ Keller clarifies that both do not perceive God’s law as an expression of God’s grace:

In both cases, the law of God is viewed not as an expression of his gracious love for us but rather as a burden, a necessary tool for mollifying an unloving deity. Both mind-sets share the same incomprehension of the joy of obedience. They see it as something imposed on us by a God whose love is conditional and who is unwilling to give blessing. The only difference between the two is that the legalist assumes the burden wearily, while the antinomian refuses it and casts it off. But both see God in the same light.³⁶

In this distorted view of God, followers of both pursue their own ways to take blessings or salvation from an ungenerous Lord.

³¹ Keller, *Preaching*, 53-54.

³² Keller, “The Centrality of the Gospel.”

³³ Keller, *Preaching*, 54.

³⁴ Keller, “The Gospel—Key to Change.”

³⁵ Keller, *Preaching*, 55.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

Second, both legalistic and antinomian people would like to be saviors and lords of their lives and avoid Jesus as their Savior and Lord.³⁷ Legalists strive to be their saviors and lords through religious pride by obeying God’s law. Their mentality is that I obey God’s law more than others do, so God owes me a happier life than he owes anyone else. He should not allow anything bad to happen in my life. He has to answer my prayers because I have earned the Lord’s blessings through my obedience.³⁸ This thought shows that legalists want to be their saviors by obeying God’s law. By contrast, antinomians want to be their saviors by disobeying God’s law.³⁹ They pursue being their saviors and lords through worldly pride. Their mind-set is that I have full authority to determine what is right and wrong for me. No one requires me to follow certain ways of life. Keller acknowledges a common ground for the two extremes, describing that “these are two different ways to do the same thing—control their own lives.”⁴⁰

Finally, both refuse the depth of sin. Even though those who follow legalism may experience extreme regret with respect to their sins, they consider sins to be merely moral failure, by which their “project of self-salvation” is interrupted. In this sense, Keller asserts that for legalists, repentance is to fill in the gaps of their “project of self-salvation.”⁴¹ Legalists repent of sins for the bad things, but do not repent of the good things by which they are saving themselves. In other words, they do not repent of self-righteousness and “self-salvation,” just like a Pharisee.⁴² Antinomians deny the depth of

³⁷ Keller, *Preaching*, 51.

³⁸ Keller, “The Centrality of the Gospel.”

³⁹ Keller, *Gospel in Life*, 17.

⁴⁰ Keller, “The Centrality of the Gospel.”

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Keller, “Our New Global Culture,” 7.

sin, too. They even refute the existence of God's absolute law; hence, they do not repent at all.⁴³

A Third Way, the Gospel

Keller maintains that there is no remedy in the middle of legalism and antinomianism.⁴⁴ Many assume that the remedy lies between the opposite extremes.

Keller disagrees with this assumption, claiming:

We must never forget that Jesus was full of grace and truth (John 1:14). "Truth" without grace is not really truth, and "grace" without truth is not really grace. Any religion or philosophy of life that de-emphasizes or loses one or the other of these truths falls into legalism or into [antinomianism]. Either way, the joy and power and release of the gospel are stolen—by one thief or the other.⁴⁵

Those who recognize the problem of legalism think that the antidote is concentrating less on obedience and more on mercy and forgiveness. By contrast, those who acknowledge the danger of antinomianism think that the remedy is talking less about grace and more about a holy God and his holy commands.⁴⁶ According to Keller, these ways of attempting to heal one with a dose of the other are lethal because dealing with one of these dangers makes people slip into the other.⁴⁷ In addition, this method is detrimental because the approach does not deal with the same basis of both problems.⁴⁸

Keller argues that the gospel is "a third way of relating to God through grace"⁴⁹ and the only antidote for both enemies: "Both legalism and antinomianism are

⁴³ Keller, *Gospel in Life*, 15.

⁴⁴ Keller, "The Centrality of the Gospel."

⁴⁵ Keller, *Center Church*, 48.

⁴⁶ Keller, *Preaching*, 55.

⁴⁷ Keller, *Center Church*, 48.

⁴⁸ Keller, *Preaching*, 55.

⁴⁹ Timothy J. Keller, "The Gospel Is Neither Religion nor Irreligion," Twitter, June 12, 2014, accessed January 18, 2018, <https://twitter.com/timkellernyc/status/480797877737111552?lang=en>.

healed only by the gospel.”⁵⁰ The gospel, according to Keller, makes plain God’s costly love in Jesus Christ, who fulfilled God’s righteous law through his life and death. Keller points out that the abstract assertion that “you are forgiven” cannot annihilate legalism. The only way of destroying it is making people realize God’s costly love in Jesus Christ through the gospel. In light of the gospel, God is not a grudging Lord, but a gracious God, who gave his only son on the cross for sinners. His law is not just a means of controlling humanity, but a guide for human beings’ true happiness. Antinomianism additionally misunderstands God’s law as a disturbance of freedom because it does not recognize God’s free and costly love in Jesus Christ. In the point of the gospel, God’s law is the great way by which the Lord enables humanity to be truly free.⁵¹ In addition, the gospel reveals how vital it is to keep the law of God because Jesus made himself thoroughly obedient to it as much as he died to pay its penalty.⁵²

The Good News of Changed Lives

Keller asserts that all kinds of problems occur when there is no centrality of the gospel, mentioning that “all our problems come from a lack of orientation to the gospel.”⁵³ Phrasing it in a positive manner, anything is renewed and transformed by Christ when the centrality of the gospel is restored. The reason Keller boldly argues for the certainty of the changing power of the gospel is that the gospel attacks a fundamental human problem, *sin*, which is underneath behavioral *sins*. Keller considers sin to be “the

⁵⁰ Keller, *Preaching*, 56.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

⁵² Keller, *Gospel in Life*, 24-25.

⁵³ Keller, “The Centrality of the Gospel.”

internal distortion of heart,” and it is the foundation of all sins.⁵⁴ Without striking sin by the gospel, behavioral compliance to certain standards is superficial and momentary.⁵⁵

Keller maintains that sin creates the extreme neediness of humanity: “We have the *need* to be constantly respected, to be appreciated, and to be highly regarded. We *need* to control our lives—not trusting God or anyone else with them. We *need* to have power over others in order to boost our self-esteem. . . . Our needs will overwhelm us and drive our behavior” (emphasis in original).⁵⁶ As a result of the fall, humans crave security and approval by their own efforts, apart from the Lord. If human beings think they win those, they become full of arrogance, but still fear the possibility of losing security and approval.⁵⁷ This fact means that fear and pride are two main drives of humanity.

How the Gospel Works

Keller articulates how the gospel destroys pride and fear and ensures unshakable security and valued identity in Christ alone: “[In the gospel, human beings realize that they] are more flawed and sinful than [they] ever dared believe, yet [they] are more loved and accepted than [they] ever dared hope.”⁵⁸ In his assertion, the former part saves humans from pride because it shows that their sin is so horrible that Jesus had to

⁵⁴ Timothy J. Keller, “Anatomy of Sin—Part 2” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, January 29, 1992), Logos Bible Software. Keller sometimes calls “the internal distortion of heart” self-centered heart or a lack of centrality of God.

⁵⁵ Keller, *Center Church*, 70.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 68-69.

⁵⁷ Based on Gen 3:7-24, Keller articulates nakedness as the result of sin; human beings’ solutions to nakedness, which do not work at all; and God’s divine solution to nakedness. In this sermon, Keller holds that the root of all things that human beings are doing is “the desire to cover [their] nakedness.” This means that people strive to cover both the sense that they are unacceptable and the flaws that they do not want others to see. According to Keller, they believe the only way to be loved is concealment by their own efforts. Timothy J. Keller, “Nakedness and the Holiness of God” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, March 21, 1993), Logos Bible Software.

⁵⁸ Keller, “The Gospel—Key to Change.”

die for them. Simultaneously, the latter one collapses fearfulness because nothing will be able to exhaust God's love for them.⁵⁹ Keller clarifies how the gospel decimates sin; handles pride and fearfulness; and effects real changes with three biblical examples: racism or cultural superiority, generosity, and marriage.

Biblical Examples

First, Keller explains that Galatians 2:11-16 demonstrates how the gospel demolishes a fundamental refusal to rest in Christ's salvation. In this passage, Paul opposes Peter because Peter is not acting in line with the truth of the gospel by separating himself from the Gentiles. In verse 14, the Greek term *orthopodeo* means not merely to act, but to straight (*otho*) walk (*podeo*). In both the OT and the NT, the word *walk* is an important metaphor for the course of people's whole lives: thoughts, feelings, motivations, and behavior. According to Keller, in Galatians 2:14, the phrase pertaining to "walking in line with the truth of the gospel" means that the gospel has a huge number of implications for every area of Christian life. He maintains,

The gospel sends out lines. The gospel has a truth. Not acting, not living in line is not being affected by the truth of the gospel. That's the principle, and that's how you're supposed to live your life. You're supposed to think out the implications of the gospel and of the constituent premises and truths of the gospel, and you're supposed to bring absolutely every part of your walk (not just your action), your thinking, your feeling, your action, your behavior, and you're supposed to be congruent with it. You're supposed to follow the trajectory.⁶⁰

Keller stresses that it is crucial for Paul to point out the root of problems, which is underneath external wrongdoings. In Galatians 2, Paul does not condemn Peter's racism or cultural superiority directly. He does not simply say that racism is a sin, which it is. Instead, he focuses on the gospel and makes it shed light on Peter's attitude. For this reason, it is obvious that Peter's attitude is not in accordance with the gospel. According to Keller, in this passage, Paul considers racism to be a result of spiritual confusion,

⁵⁹ Keller, *Center Church*, 69.

⁶⁰ Keller, "The Heart of the Gospel."

which is forgetting he is saved by grace alone. Peter's racial superiority is caused by denial of the gospel as the good news of generous acceptance. This fact is because his attitude, according to Keller, is attempting to add to Jesus Christ and implies that the Gentiles have to believe something else besides belief in Jesus Christ to cleanse themselves.⁶¹ This example illustrates that, without coping with the core of the external problem through the gospel, there is no genuine repentance and new way of life. In this sense, Paul does not emphasize the sinful behavior itself, but the sinful attitude of self-righteousness that is underneath sinful acts. Solely the gospel heals this sinful attitude.⁶²

Second, Keller clarifies that the gospel enables believers to be generous to the poor. He elucidates the eighth and ninth chapters of 2 Corinthians, in which Paul encourages Christians in Corinth to give an offering to those who are in need.⁶³ In this passage, Paul lifts the gospel up the highest: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9). Keller pronounces the meaning of this verse in terms of generosity:

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.⁶⁴

Keller's argument shows that Paul brings the gospel into the realms of wealth and poverty to solve the practical problem. Paul makes Christians emphasize thinking on the

⁶¹ Keller, "The Heart of the Gospel."

⁶² Timothy J. Keller, *Galatians for You: For Reading, for Feeding, for Leading* (Purcellville, VA: Good Book, 2013), 56.

⁶³ Keller, *Center Church*, 67.

⁶⁴ Timothy J. Keller, "Creation, Fall, Redemption—and Your Money," *Gospel in Life*, 4, accessed November 9, 2017, <http://www.gospelinlife.com/creation-fall-redemption-and-your-money>.

gospel of costly love in Jesus Christ. Paul's approach to money implies that the only solutions to parsimony are remembering and revitalizing Christ's generosity in the gospel.⁶⁵

Keller stresses that it is significant for Paul to concentrate on the gospel—not on all other methods of facilitating an offering. Paul does not, with his authority of an apostle, command believers to give. He does not threaten them with God's punishment against the ungenerous, nor does he implement an emotional appeal by telling them stories about how horribly the poor are suffering.⁶⁶ All these methods work superficially because they cannot deal with security and approval issues, which are fundamental reasons for stinginess of believers. The gospel, not all other ways, enables believers not to worry about money because Jesus Christ's sacrificial death on the cross proves God's care for Christians and demonstrates their unshakable security in Christ. Moreover, the gospel helps believers not to obsess concerning people's approval of wealth because, through the gospel, the Lord has already given Christians a remarkable status as a son and a daughter of God, with which enormous wealth cannot provide them.⁶⁷

Finally, based on the gospel (Eph 5:25-33), Keller contends that Paul encourages husbands to love their wives faithfully. According to Keller, most husbands in Paul's time understood marriage from their pagan cultures, in which they regarded marriage as a way of making profits. In this situation, Paul does not simply ask Christian husbands to make every effort to love their wives, nor does he merely challenge their business relationships in marriage. Rather, he exhorts believers to see true love manifested in the cross. Paul shows Jesus to be believers' ultimate spouse, who laid down his life for his bride. His sacrificial love, according to Keller, was not for his benefit, but

⁶⁵ Keller, "Creation, Fall, Redemption—and Your Money."

⁶⁶ Keller, *Center Church*, 67.

⁶⁷ Keller, "The Gospel—Key to Change."

for their profits—salvation from the ultimate danger.⁶⁸ In other words, Paul deconstructs the cultural concept of marriage and builds it on the basis of the gospel. Consequently, he clarifies how husbands are supposed to love their wives. They must love their wives faithfully just like Jesus loves them. Expressing it in a different way, those who know Jesus Christ’s faithful love for them love their spouses based not on their willpower, but on sacrificial love from the cross. In this sense, Keller holds that the gospel changes married life.

Keller concludes that individual changes do not happen through a strong willpower, but only through realizing the radical gospel of grace:

What will truly make us sexually faithful spouses or generous persons or good parents or faithful children is not a redoubled effort to follow the example of Christ. Rather, it is deepening our understanding of the salvation of Christ and living out of the changes this understanding makes in our hearts—the seat of our minds, will, and emotions. Behavioral compliance to rules without heart change through the gospel will be superficial and fleeting.⁶⁹

His assertion implies that the gospel deconstructs the influence of sin and reconstructs human motivation, self-identity, and worldview. Hence, Christian lives are radically different from non-Christian lives.⁷⁰

The Good News of the New World Coming

Keller argues that the gospel is the good news not only for individuals, but also for the entire creation based on the scriptural plotline (Creation-Fall-Redemption-Restoration).⁷¹

⁶⁸ Keller, *Center Church*, 68.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁷⁰ Keller, “The Gospel—Key to Change.” Keller furnishes a great number of examples about the ways the gospel brings about individual changes, such as discouragement, suffering, sexuality, self-control, family life, and humor. See details. Keller, “The Centrality of the Gospel.”

⁷¹ Keller, “The Gospel—Key to Change”; Timothy J. Keller, “Five Ministry Fronts in the City,” *Gospel in Life*, 1, accessed January 13, 2018, <https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/five-ministry-fronts-in-the-city/>.

The One Gospel

Because there is only one gospel, the gospel that asks sinners to believe in Jesus demands that Christians should assume social responsibility, as well. In other words, the gospel includes not just the fact that sinners require forgiveness, but the fact that creation needs to be redeemed from sin and made new, too.⁷² In this sense, the gospel of Jesus Christ is restoring every aspect of life, including spiritual, psychological, social, economic, and physical ones. The wholistic restoration driven by the gospel requires that his church perform wholistic ministry.⁷³ Keller claims,

Churches . . . will pursue an integrative, balanced ministry. . . . Because the gospel renews not only individuals but also communities and culture, the church should disciple its people to seek personal conversion, deep Christian community, social justice, and cultural renewal in the city. These ministry areas should not be seen as independent or optional but as interdependent and fully biblical.⁷⁴

Keller's contention illustrates that because the gospel redeems and renews the world, the church should resist the results of sin as a channel of God's grace.⁷⁵

How the Gospel Works

Keller articulates how the gospel works for social justice and cultural engagement.

⁷² Keller, "Five Ministry Fronts," 2.

⁷³ In his Christmas sermon, Keller argues for God's care for the whole world on the basis of Col 1:19-20: "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." According to Keller, in this sermon, the meaning of Christmas is that the reconciliation through Christ is more than the salvation of sinners because the Lord is at work to reconcile to himself all things. This assertion demonstrates that God cares not only about evangelism and discipleship, but about mercy ministry and social justice in the world. Timothy J. Keller, "God and Sinners Reconciled" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, December 24, 1995), Logos Bible Software.

⁷⁴ Keller, *Center Church*, 291.

⁷⁵ Keller, "Creation, Fall, Redemption—and Your Money." In this article, Keller furnishes a specific instance about how Christians can be a channel of God's grace by using their money as "a currency of grace." He says, "Our money is ours by grace, and when we give it away generously and joyfully, it comes to other people like God's grace." Moreover, Keller presents the way the gospel transforms humanity's approach to the physical world, sexuality, races, and cultures. See Keller, "The Centrality of the Gospel."

Social justice. He asserts that the gospel causes Christians to possess a sensitive social conscience with respect to the poor, describing that “justification by faith leads to justice.”⁷⁶ Based on Isaiah 29:31; 58:3-7; Matthew 25:31-46; Mark 12:38-40; Luke 11:38-42; and James 2:14-17, Keller argues for a strong statement: “If you are justified by faith, the inevitable sign is a life poured out in deeds of justice and service to the poor.”⁷⁷ He believes that Christians are saved by grace—not by works—and if one experiences God’s grace, he or she will demonstrate certain works as sure signs of his or her living faith. In other words, certain works (care for the poor), according to Keller, cannot save a person, but can show whether that individual experiences God’s grace. He provides three specific reasons that the gospel promotes social justice.

Keller insists that “justification by faith gives [Christians] a high view of justice.”⁷⁸ According to him, there are two alternatives to the doctrine of justification: legalism and Christian relativism. The followers of the former think that if they exert enough effort to obey God, they can be saved. This assertion implies that, for them, the law of God seems to be not too high to reach; the bar of God is defined as lower. The advocates of the latter feel that the Lord loves all people and so will accept everybody, no matter how one lives. This position ignores the law of God.⁷⁹ The gospel (justification by faith), however, offers believers a drastically high view of holiness, justice, and the law of the Lord. God’s Son, Jesus, had to die on the cross because God cannot overlook his law and justice. Keller explains,

The classic Christian doctrine is that on the cross Jesus actually saved us by standing in our place and paying our debt to the law of God. If the Lord takes his

⁷⁶ Timothy J. Keller, “The Both/And of the Gospel,” *Qideas*, accessed March 10, 2018, <http://qideas.org/videos/the-both-and-of-the-gospel-1>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Timothy J. Keller, *Generous Justice: How God’s Grace Makes Us Just* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 100.

law so seriously that he could not shrug off our disobedience to it, that he *had* to become human, come to earth, and die a terrible death—then we must take that law very seriously too. The law of God demands equity and justice, and love of one’s neighbor. People who believe strongly in the doctrine of justification by faith alone will have this high regard for God’s law and justice (emphasis in original).⁸⁰

In Keller’s view, those who were justified by faith cannot overlook justice because the Lord is a holy God, who sent his Son to meet the requirements of his law. Because the Lord does not lower his bar of justice, Christians must respect God’s justice.

Second, Keller holds that “justification by faith gives believers a new attitude toward the poor.”⁸¹ Based on Matthew 5:3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” he claims that those who recognize their “spiritual bankruptcy” experience God’s blessings and salvation. This assertion means that those who acknowledge their inability to save themselves rely solely on God’s free generosity to them and are saved by grace. In contrast to “spiritual bankruptcy,” those who are “middle-class in spirit” think that their lives are rooted in their efforts and hard work. In their minds, the Lord is indebted to them for what they have done, such as prayers and offerings.⁸² Keller insists that people who are “middle-class in spirit” tend to be indifferent to the poor or to look down on the poor.

The gospel, according to Keller, attacks indifference and superiority caused by “middle-class in spirit” because the gospel makes them look in a mirror when they are considering those who are in desperate need.⁸³ Keller articulates:

To the degree that the gospel shapes your self-image, you will identify with those in need. . . . When you come upon those who are economically poor, you cannot say to them, “Pull yourself up by your bootstraps!” because you certainly did not do that spiritually. Jesus intervened for you. And you cannot say, “I won’t help you because you got yourself into this mess,” since God came to earth, moved into your spiritually poor neighborhood, as it were, and helped you even though your spiritual problems were your own fault.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Keller, *Generous Justice*, 100-101.

⁸¹ Keller, “The Both/And of the Gospel.”

⁸² Keller, *Generous Justice*, 101-2.

⁸³ Keller, “The Both/And of the Gospel.”

⁸⁴ Keller, *Generous Justice*, 102-3.

In other words, the gospel clarifies that the only way to get Christians out of spiritual poverty and into spiritual riches is that Christ, who is spiritually rich, experiences spiritual poverty on the cross. Thus, when Christians—the spiritually poor—meet the materially poor, they must identify themselves through the poor and treat the poor just as Jesus treated them. In this sense, Keller contends that the gospel enables believers to have a new attitude toward the poor.

Finally, Keller attests that justification by grace alone enables the poor to have a new and valued identity in Christ.⁸⁵ According to Keller, while liberalism does not believe in the doctrine of justification by grace alone, conservatism does not think that this fundamental doctrine is helpful to heal the poverty problem. Both consider the gospel to be nonessential for solving a vicious cycle of poverty. However, Keller disagrees with both positions and agrees with Miroslav Volf, who feels that the gospel has enormously undeveloped resources for healing poverty. Keller cites Volf’s writing in support of his argument:⁸⁶

Imagine that you have no job, no money, you live cut off from the rest of society in a world ruled by poverty and violence, your skin is the “wrong” color—and you have no hope that any of this will change. Around you is a society governed by the iron law of achievement. Its gilded goods are flaunted before your eyes on TV screens, and in a thousand ways society tells you every day that you are worthless because you have no achievement. You are a failure, and you know that you will continue to be a failure because there is no way to achieve tomorrow what you have not managed to achieve today. Your dignity is shattered and your soul is enveloped in the darkness of despair. But the gospel tells you that you are not defined by outside forces. It tells you that you count; even more, that you are loved unconditionally and infinitely, irrespective of anything you have achieved or failed to achieve. Imagine now this gospel not simply proclaimed but embodied in a community. Justified by sheer grace, it seeks to “justify” by grace those declared “unjust” by a society’s implacable law of achievement. Imagine, furthermore, this community determined to infuse the wider culture, along with its political and economic institutions, with the message that it seeks to embody and proclaim. This is justification by grace, proclaimed and practiced. A dead doctrine? Hardly!⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Keller, “The Both/And of the Gospel.”

⁸⁶ Keller, *Generous Justice*, 105-6.

⁸⁷ Miroslav Volf, *Against the Tide: Love in a Time of Petty Dreams and Persisting Enmities* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 138.

By quoting Volf's assertion, Keller clarifies that the gospel provides the poor not only with forgiveness for their bad record, but with full acceptance through Christ's perfect record, as well. In other words, in contrast to worldly values, the poor are not useless losers according to the gospel. Just like rich and successful Christians, they are valued as children of God, too. With this new identity in Christ, the poor do not have to despair with regard to their lives and can start over once again with the power of the gospel. In this sense, Keller argues that "the gospel changes the self-understanding of the poor person."⁸⁸

Cultural engagement. Keller expounds that the gospel is essential to cultural renewal. He analyzes how Christians relate to the culture and identifies two unhealthy extremes: withdrawal mentality and triumphalism. The followers of the former explain, "Christianity is not really here to mend the world." According to Keller, this cultural view is antinomianism in that they are fine the way the culture is. By contrast, the advocates of the latter state, "[Christianity is] going to make the culture the way it ought to be." This perception of the culture, according to Keller, is legalism in that they think they can change the culture with their power. Keller believes that the gospel does not affirm these two approaches to the culture and maintains that the gospel presents a third way between two positions.⁸⁹

Keller articulates two reasons that the gospel is a foundation to a cultural engagement. First, the gospel rebuts triumphalism and gives Christians the humility to work with unbelievers. The gospel clarifies God's work through grace. The Lord pours out grace, so that grace alone saves sinners. God works in sinners' lives, despite their fundamental flaws. This gospel makes Christians humble enough to realize that God can

⁸⁸ Keller, *Generous Justice*, 104.

⁸⁹ Timothy J. Keller, "Humble Cultural Engagement," *Faith and Work*, accessed March 12, 2018, <https://www.faithandwork.com/blog/humble-cultural-engagement>.

work through both believers and unbelievers; thus, not only Christians, but also non-Christians, are granted gifts of wisdom, of skill, and of excellence, and can contribute to the common good.⁹⁰ Keller notes,

Through the Gospel, Christians should be humbled, enough to see that God always works through grace, and always works through gifts. And when you look out there, you see the whole society, the whole world aflame with the glory and grace of God all over the place. There's a tendency for Christians to be so negative about society, so negative about culture. And there's a self-righteousness in that that does not behoove people who understand they're sinners saved by grace. So, the Christian gospel teaches you to enjoy God's gifts, wherever they are, and make you humbly cooperate with other people for the common good.⁹¹

Second, Keller claims that the gospel disproves antinomianism and gives Christians the courage and insight to respectfully challenge the culture.⁹² To elucidate the second point, Keller introduces the importance of a worldview. He feels that a worldview is significant because it is a lens through which human beings interpret all of reality related to three questions: "1) what human life in the world should be like (a purpose); 2) what has knocked it off balance (a problem); and 3) what can be done to make it right (a solution)."⁹³ According to Keller, human beings answer these big questions and determine ways they live in this world, but their responses are not usually considered carefully nor consistently with each other; therefore, many people possess various pieces of worldviews. Even Christians often operate their personal and public lives based on such a worldview as

⁹⁰ Keller, "Humble Cultural Engagement." Keller connects this point with the common grace and the goodness of creation. See Timothy J. Keller, "What Is Christian Cultural Engagement?" *Gospel in Life*, accessed March 12, 2018, <https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/what-is-christian-cultural-engagement-8305/>; Timothy J. Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* (New York: Penguin, 2014), 162.

⁹¹ Keller, "Humble Cultural Engagement."

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 157.

individualism or materialism.⁹⁴ This situation implies that even believers' works in the culture are rebellious to God.

Keller holds that the gospel enables Christians to live through a Christian worldview (creation, fall, redemption, and restoration), commenting,

The gospel is the true story that God made a good world that was marred by sin and evil, but through Jesus Christ he redeemed it at infinite cost to himself, so that someday he will return to renew all creation; end all suffering and death; and restore absolute peace, justice, and joy in the world forever. The vast implications of this gospel worldview—about the character of God, the goodness of the material creation, the value of the human person, the fallenness of all people and all things, the primacy of love and grace, the importance of justice and truth, the hope of redemption—affect everything, and especially our work.⁹⁵

Based on the gospel worldview, believers' jobs are supposed to be done for the Lord's glory—not just for their glory, their status, their successes, or company profits.

Consequently, Christians need to endeavor to make the rebellious culture the godly culture. Keller summarizes two points:

You go out there humbly, respectfully. But, at the same time, you have to have the courage and you also have the insight to know that the gospel shapes the way in which you work, because the glory of God shapes the way in which you work. . . . Everyone works for some reasons, everyone works from a particular worldview. And when Christians move out into the world because they believe the gospel, they think gospel wise. They've got the courage and the insight to change the way work is done from the inside. Not in a triumphalistic way, taking over. Not failing to appreciate the fact that all kinds of people who are not Christians, who don't have a better worldview might be doing a better job in your work than you are because of the way God tends to operate, because of the way God gives His gifts of grace all over the place.⁹⁶

In other words, the gospel, according to Keller, has a paradoxical balance in that it humbles Christians to appreciate what unbelievers do. In addition, it enables Christians to recognize what has fallen, and emboldens them to provoke the fallen culture.

Keller finally claims that the church should be saturated with the gospel to be a faithful channel of grace:

⁹⁴ Keller, "What Is Christian Cultural Engagement?," 90.

⁹⁵ Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 163.

⁹⁶ Keller, "Humble Cultural Engagement."

Christ wins our salvation through losing, achieves power through weakness and service, and comes to wealth via giving all away. Those who receive his salvation are not the strong and accomplished but those who admit that they are weak and lost. This pattern creates an “alternate kingdom” or “city” (Matt 5:14-16), in which there is a complete reversal of the values of the world with regard to power, recognition, status, and wealth. When we understand that we are saved by sheer grace through Christ, we stop seeking salvation in these things. The reversal of the cross, therefore, liberates us from bondage to the power of material things and worldly status in our lives. The gospel, therefore, creates a people with a whole alternate way of being human. Racial and class superiority, accrual of money and power at the expense of others, yearning for popularity and recognition--all these things are marks of living in the world, and are the opposite of the mindset of the kingdom (Luke 6:20-26).⁹⁷

This argument clarifies how significant it is for the church to be “a gospel-centered church” because the gospel can confront and change the values of the world, such as power, status, recognition, and wealth.⁹⁸ This means that the gospel creates a new order, in which Christians are controlled not by worldly values, but by biblical ones.⁹⁹ In this sense, wholistic ministry in the church never works without the clear understanding of the gospel.

The Kingdom of God

Keller insists that because God’s kingdom is the Lord’s ruling power over all the curse of sin, the church must work for the renewal of the entire world.¹⁰⁰ Keller describes how God utilizes his church for restoration in relation to the kingdom of God. First, he regards the church as “a pilot plant of the kingdom of God”: “The church is to be a new society in which the world can see what family dynamics, business practices, race relations, and all of life can be under the kingship of Jesus Christ.”¹⁰¹ In addition, he maintains, “God’s purpose . . . is not simply to save individual souls but to create a new

⁹⁷ Keller, “The Gospel—Key to Change.”

⁹⁸ Keller, “Our New Global Culture,” 16.

⁹⁹ Keller, “The Gospel—Key to Change.”

¹⁰⁰ Timothy J. Keller, *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2015), 54.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

humanity, a people with a communal life that reflects in some degree the future kingdom of God.”¹⁰² These two assertions demonstrate that the church is the representative of God’s kingdom to the world. It is not just a gathering in which there are a number of Christians who are forgiven. Through the church, the world perceives a counterculture in which things are restored because they are brought back under Christ’s kingship.

Second, Keller contends that the church is an agent of the kingdom of God: “[The church] is not only to model the healing of God’s rule but it is to spread it.”¹⁰³ Keller feels that spreading the kingdom is more than simply evangelism and discipleship. It is working for healing every aspect of life that is under the influence and the result of sin, as well. This means that the church, as a kingdom agent, should strongly emphasize evangelism and social concern.¹⁰⁴ Keller notes,

[His] saving power is at work in the gathered church, but it is not exclusive to the church. . . . We should expect healing from sin in all areas of life—private and public, within the church *and* [emphasis in original] out in culture. We must see the gathered church as the great vehicle for this restoration—and yet individual Christians out in the world can be said to be representatives of the kingdom as well. We cannot separate our spiritual or church life from our secular or cultural life. Every part of our life—vocational, civic, familial, recreational, material, sexual, financial, political—is to be presented as “living sacrifice” to God (Rom 12:1-2).¹⁰⁵

According to Keller, the church needs to strive to heal all the curse of sin in all areas because the church is an agent of God’s kingdom.¹⁰⁶

Keller warns the church against triumphalism by delineating that the church’s full efforts for social engagement cannot bring about “grand social transformations.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Keller, “Our New Global Culture,” 15.

¹⁰³ Keller, *Ministries of Mercy*, 56.

¹⁰⁴ Keller, “Our New Global Culture,” 16.

¹⁰⁵ Keller, *Center Church*, 229.

¹⁰⁶ Keller, *Ministries of Mercy*, 45.

¹⁰⁷ Keller, *Center Church*, 228.

Keller acknowledges the kingdom of God comes in two stages. It has already arrived partially through the first coming of Jesus; it will come fully through Christ's second coming.¹⁰⁸ Two stages of the kingdom imply that the church's full effort to spread the kingdom cannot make this world the kingdom entirely. It will be totally established only when Jesus returns.¹⁰⁹ Phrasing it differently, the kingdom will be completely established by his hand alone—not by human hands.¹¹⁰ The fact that God alone will establish the kingdom, though, does not deny the legitimacy of social engagement of the church. Rather, it supports the church's evangelism and active social concerns because Jesus Christ's second arrival clarifies that he wants to terminate all kinds of evil.

The Mission of the Church

Keller believes that the mission of the church is making disciples. He prefers this succinct comprehension of the church's mission because it helps the church to focus on what it alone can do.¹¹¹ He observes, "It is best to speak of the 'mission of the church,' strictly conceived, as being the proclamation of the Word."¹¹² However, he might have a different perspective from others about what disciples look like. For him, making disciples implies that Christians must be equipped to evangelize sinners, love their neighbors by demonstrating justice and mercy, and integrate their faith with their work.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Keller, *Ministries of Mercy*, 54-55.

¹⁰⁹ Timothy J. Keller, "The New Heaven and New Earth" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, April 12, 2009), Logos Bible Software.

¹¹⁰ Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 131.

¹¹¹ Trevin Wax, "Gospel, Culture, and Mission: An Interview with Tim Keller," *The Gospel Coalition*, accessed January 18, 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/gospel-culture-and-mission-an-interview-with-tim-keller/>.

¹¹² Keller, *Generous Justice*, 216.

¹¹³ Wax, "Gospel, Culture, and Mission."

In this broad sense, Keller argues for the church's dual mission: "While the mission of the institutional church is to preach the Word and produce disciples, the church must disciple Christians in such a way that they live justly and integrate their faith with their work."¹¹⁴ In addition, "More broadly conceived, [the mission of the church] is the work of Christians in the world to minister in word and deed and to gather together to do justice."¹¹⁵ Furthermore, Keller has been a framer of the *Missional Manifesto*, which doubtlessly endorses missional duality:

We believe the mission and responsibility of the church include both the proclamation of the Gospel and its demonstration. From Jesus, we learn the truth is to be proclaimed with authority and lived with grace. The church must constantly evangelize, respond lovingly to human needs, as well as "seek the welfare of the city" (Jeremiah 29:7). By living out the implications of the gospel, the missional church offers a verbal defense and a living example of its power.¹¹⁶

The fact that Keller supports the dual mission of the church does not mean that he argues for cultural transformation through the church. Peter J. Naylor, who misunderstands Keller's missional duality, remarks, "Keller's main thesis is that the church has a twofold mission in this world: 1) to preach the gospel and 2) to do justice, which involves social and cultural transformation and renewal."¹¹⁷ Naylor's assertion assumes that Keller thinks that one of the church's missions is social transformation. However, the fact that Keller supports the dual mission does not imply that he maintains that a part of the mission of the church is social renewal. Keller disagrees with the idea that the church

¹¹⁴ Timothy J. Keller, "Coming Together on Culture: Theological Issues," *The Gospel Coalition*, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/coming-together-on-culture-theological-issues/>.

¹¹⁵ Keller, *Generous Justice*, 216.

¹¹⁶ Ed Stetzer and Alan Hirsch, "Missional Manifesto," *Missional Manifesto*, accessed March 1, 2018, <http://www.missionalmanifesto.net/>.

¹¹⁷ Peter J. Naylor, "The Church's Mission: Sent to 'do Justice' in the World?," in *Engaging with Keller: Thinking through the Theology of an Influential Evangelical*, ed. Iain D. Campbell and William M. Schweitzer (Grand Rapids: EP Books, 2013), 137.

should pursue cultural reformation, but does insist that the church disciplines and supports believers, who can influence social and cultural changes in their lives.¹¹⁸ He goes on to say,

The church's gospel ministry includes both evangelizing non-believers and shaping every area of believers' lives with the gospel, but that doesn't mean that the church as an institution under its elders is to carry out corporately all the activity that we equip our members to do. For example, while the church should disciple its members who are film-makers so that their cinematic art will be profoundly influenced by the gospel, the church should not operate a film production company.¹¹⁹

Keller contends that the church does not exist for social reformation, but should help believers to hold biblical values and a worldview that can result in social implications in their lives, such as family, school, workplace, and business.¹²⁰ In other words, he supports missional duality in a sense that the church assists the congregation in understanding how Christians live in public areas with a scriptural worldview—not a sense that the church is directly involved with social revolution.¹²¹ Keller says, “The job of the institutional church gathered is not to change social structures/culture, but to create disciples (who comprise the ‘organic’ church dispersed) who will change social structures and the culture.”¹²² His view pertaining to the dual mission does not affirm cultural transformation through the church.

Relationship between Evangelism and Social Concern

Keller clarifies the mission of the church by explaining the relationship between evangelism and social concern. He encapsulates four views with respect to the mission of the church:

¹¹⁸ Keller, “Coming Together on Culture.”

¹¹⁹ Timothy J. Keller, “The Gospel and the Poor,” *Themelios* 33, no. 3 (December 2008): 20.

¹²⁰ Wax, “Gospel, Culture, and Mission.”

¹²¹ Keller, *Center Church*, 324.

¹²² Wax, “Gospel, Culture, and Mission.”

1) The church's mission is to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and do discipline in order to evangelize and disciple. Period. 2) The church's mission is to do word as well as deed ministry—doing justice and serving the needy—but it grants a priority to evangelism/word ministry. 3) The church's mission is to both do justice and preach grace without giving priority, integrating both together into a seamless cloth. 4) The church's mission is not to dictate beliefs, but only to serve the good of society. Social concern is evangelism.¹²³

He holds to a seemingly contradictory idea that the second and the third positions are both correct, mentioning, “So here's how #2 and #3 can actually both be right. Evangelism, in principle, is the most important ministry, but in practice, it must always exist in an inseparable weave with deed ministry.”¹²⁴ In this statement, Keller differentiates between “in principle” and “in practice,” and maintains that “in principle” the second view is right *and* “in practice” the third view is additionally right. His argument should be examined in detail.

Premise: Evangelism is distinct. Keller acknowledges that evangelism is distinct from social justice. He disagrees with an argument for reducing evangelism to social ethics. He contends that the gospel must be preached with verbal witness, instead of performing virtuous deeds. He refutes the idea that “preach the gospel; use words if necessary” because the assertion regards the gospel as basically “a way of life.” In other words, it makes the good news of Jesus Christ good advice of moral enhancement. Keller describes, “It essentially denies the gospel of *grace* through God's saving acts in history and replaces it with good works and moral improvement” (emphasis in original).¹²⁵ Expressing it differently, social activities should not substitute for the proclamation of the gospel because the gospel can be delivered only by a verbal witness, not by good deeds.¹²⁶ Evangelism and social engagement should not be confused with each other.

¹²³ Timothy J. Keller, “Contextual and Missional,” *Christianity Matters*, 1, accessed January 13, 2018, <https://christianitymatters.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/8-contextual-and-missional-by-tim-keller.pdf>.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

¹²⁵ Keller, “The Gospel and the Poor,” 15-16.

¹²⁶ Duane Litfin also strongly rebuts the assertion that the gospel can be preached with deeds

The second view: Evangelism priority. “In principle,” Keller thinks that evangelism is more vital than is social justice for two reasons. First, the church loses the most distinctive service that it can present to the world when it takes social justice at its center:

We must first establish that the ministry of the word is the priority for the local church. The first thing people need to hear when they come to church is “believe in Jesus,” not “do justice.” Why? Because believing in Jesus meets a more radical human need, and because if they don’t believe in Jesus, they won’t have the gospel motivation to do justice in the world. So the first priority of the local church under its elders is to make disciples, not to do housing rehabilitation or feed the poor.¹²⁷

In other words, individuals alongside Christians can aid those who are in desperate need. Non-Christians, though, cannot share the gospel of Jesus by which the poor can be converted into a son and a daughter of God.¹²⁸ Moreover, Keller advocates evangelism priority over social concern because the eternal is much more significant than is the temporal.¹²⁹ He explains that “while saving a lost soul and feeding a hungry stomach are both acts of love, one has an infinitely greater effect than the other.”¹³⁰ Hence, he asserts evangelism must be granted a priority in the church.

The third view: An inseparable weave between evangelism and social concern. Keller concurs with the third view in its practical sense. He observes that it is

and claims that the gospel should be preached with words. Knowledge of the field of communication supports his argument. He introduces the field of communication to distinguish verbal communication from nonverbal communication, saying that although “nonverbal channels are effective in communicating attitudes, moods, feelings, and relationships . . . [They] are inadequate for conveying . . . cognitive, abstract, or historical information” Duane Litfin, *Word versus Deed: Resetting the Scales to a Biblical Balance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 31. This position implies that the gospel—as cognitive, abstract, or historical information—cannot be preached without verbal codes. Phrasing it differently, because nonverbal codes (good deeds) cannot convey cognitive contents, it is inappropriate to communicate the gospel (cognitive contents) to people with nonverbal codes (deeds) in the light of common sense.

¹²⁷ Keller, *Center Church*, 324.

¹²⁸ Keller, *Ministries of Mercy*, 141.

¹²⁹ Keller, “Contextual and Missional,” 2.

¹³⁰ Keller, “The Gospel and the Poor,” 16.

not possible for Christians to separate evangelism from doing loving works: “The practical reality I have seen on the ground—and especially in cities—is that the more we do justice the more effective our evangelism will be.”¹³¹ Keller has met a great variety of New Yorkers who are greatly influenced by a postmodern worldview, in which there are no universal truths that most people acknowledge that evangelism may even be considered as evil. In a real context, doing justice, which precedes evangelism, is helpful to create plausibility for the gospel presentation; just deeds facilitate evangelism by gaining reliability for sharing the gospel. In this sense, he teaches that “justification by faith leads to doing justice, and doing justice can make many seek to be justified by faith.”¹³²

Additionally, Keller notes,

When a city perceives a church as existing strictly and only itself and its own members, the preaching of that church will not resonate with outsiders. But if neighbors see church members loving their city through astonishing, sacrificial deeds of compassion, they will be much more open to the church’s message. . . . There is no better way for Christians to lay a foundation for evangelism than by doing justice.¹³³

Keller maintains, too, that because human beings consist of body and soul, it is not possible for word ministry to be separated from deed ministry, especially when Christians work in a poor neighborhood.¹³⁴ He asserts, “As soon as you get involved in the lives of people—in evangelism as well as spiritual nurture—you will come upon people with practical needs. You can’t love people in word only and therefore you can’t love people as you are doing evangelism and discipleship without meeting practical and material needs through deeds.”¹³⁵ For this reason, according to him, in practical reality,

¹³¹ Keller, “Contextual and Missional,” 2-3.

¹³² Keller, *Generous Justice*, 139-40.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 142.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 142-43.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

the relationship between evangelism and social concern is “the symbiotic, whole cloth relationship.”¹³⁶ In this sense, evangelism and social engagements are equally required; they are inseparably connected with each other “as a seamless cloth.”¹³⁷ As a result, the church should concentrate on both evangelism *and* social concern.

In addition, Keller presents theological reasons that evangelism and social concern should accompany each other. Initially, the resurrection, he posits, indicates that God wants to redeem not just the spirit, but the body. Second, the salvation that Jesus will complete will encompass freedom from all the effects of sin. In other words, Christians will experience God’s wholistic salvation from all the spiritual, psychological, physical, and material bondage caused by sin. Third, in the NT, Jesus not only preached to people, but healed and fed those in need, as well.¹³⁸ Finally, Keller maintains that truth faith must be manifested in life, noting that “just as good works are inseparable from faith in the life of the believers, so caring for the poor is inseparable from the work of evangelism and the ministry of the Word.”¹³⁹ His argument shows that the gospel produces a concern for those who are in need, and this concern results in assisting the needy; thus, these two should go together.

The reason Keller can hold to the contradictory view of the mission of the church is that he distinguishes “in principle” from “in practice.” He concurs on the second position in the sense that evangelism is more important than is social concern. He elucidates this concept in a different expression in his book, *Generous Justice*, mentioning that “[evangelism and social concern should] exist in an asymmetrical, inseparable

¹³⁶ Keller, “Contextual and Missional,” 3.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹³⁸ Keller, “The Gospel and the Poor,” 18.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

relationship.”¹⁴⁰ The word *asymmetrical* implies that they are unlike the two wings of a bird. Evangelism is more significant than is social justice; therefore, the church’s primary purpose is evangelism. However, Keller also agrees with the third position in the practical sense that evangelism is *inseparable* from social concern; they are integrated together as “a seamless cloth.” His perception implies that evangelism priority should always accompany social concern. In other words, in practical reality, evangelism should not be alone, but always be paired with social responsibility to evangelize sinners. It is almost impossible for Christians to evangelize the unconverted without aiding and serving them. He concludes the relationship between evangelism and Christians’ social responsibility with these words: “We must neither confuse evangelism with doing justice, nor separate them from one another.”¹⁴¹

Conclusion

Keller highlights God’s grace manifested in Christ’s death and resurrection when he articulates the gospel because he thinks that the doctrinal content of grace can transform human beings’ hearts and inner motives. It additionally creates the gospel values, which are completely different from worldly values. Keller explains, “The gospel is the dynamic for all heart-change, life-change, and social-change. These changes will not happen through ‘trying harder’ but only through encountering with the radical grace of God.”¹⁴² In other words, the gospel, according to Keller, is good news of gracious acceptance that does not have just a personal impact, but a social impact, as well. Specific instances of both impacts at RPC will be examined in the next chapter.

¹⁴⁰ Keller, *Generous Justice*, 139.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁴² Keller, “The Gospel—Key to Change.”

CHAPTER 5
THE GOSPEL-CENTERED MINISTRY
AT REDEEMER

Introduction

Keller argues that the foundation of every RPC ministry is the gospel.¹ This gospel centrality in RPC's ministry can be detected in at least three ways. First of all, RPC's vision clarifies that the gospel is formatting RPC's five ministries: "The Redeemer family of churches and ministries exists to help build a great city for all people through a movement of the gospel that brings personal conversion, community formation, social justice, and cultural renewal to New York City and, through it, the world."² In other words, this statement elucidates that RPC's vision can be fulfilled only *through* the gospel. Second, RPC clarifies that nine core values³ are additionally based on the gospel that embodies the five ministry areas, saying, "Redeemer's vision and values flow out of the gospel and are personified through five ministry areas: Worship & Evangelism, Community Formation, Mercy & Justice, Faith & Work, and Church Planting."⁴ Finally, RPC places strong emphasis on the gospel by making it the first core value among the nine core values, contending,

¹ Timothy J. Keller, "Five Ministry Fronts in the City," *Gospel in Life*, 1, accessed January 13, 2018, <https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/five-ministry-fronts-in-the-city/>.

² Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Redeemer Vision and Values," *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed May 10, 2017, https://www.redeemer.com/learn/vision_and_values/.

³ There are nine core values: (1) Gospel Centrality; (2) Changed Lives; (3) Gospel Community; (4) City Vision; (5) Mercy and Justice; (6) Cultural Renewal; (7) Outward Face; (8) Gospel Movement; and (9) Church Planting. Ibid.

⁴ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Redeemer Presbyterian Church," *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed January 9, 2018, <https://www.redeemer.com>.

In general, the gospel is the message of the Bible that God is redeeming his fallen creation through the coming of his kingdom in the person and work of Jesus Christ. In particular, the gospel is the message that we are saved from our sins by sheer, free grace through faith in the finished work of Christ, not through our efforts and works. Redeemer believes that this gospel message of hope for the world and grace for the sinner is not merely a body of truth, but the very power of God which grows, changes, and shapes everything with which it has contact—hearts and identities, relationships, practices in every area of public and private life, and whole societies. So the gospel is “central,” first, because it is not merely one department of belief, but it is a power that affects every area of life when its implications are felt and thought out.⁵

These three ways demonstrate that the heart of RPC’s ministry is the conviction that the gospel is not just a message to be saved from the judgment and condemnation of sin, but the fundamental renewal dynamic for the whole Christian—not only individually, but also corporately.⁶ In this sense, Keller states that “the gospel is not just the ABC of Christianity, but the A to Z—that Christians need the gospel just as much as non-Christians.”⁷

This chapter will examine how Keller’s understanding of the gospel has shaped the five ministry fronts at RPC: personal conversion (connecting people to God); community formation (connecting people to one another); mercy and justice (connecting people to the city); cultural renewal (connecting people to the culture); and a gospel movement (planting gospel-centered churches).

Personal Conversion: Connecting People to God

RPC’s strong commitment to personal conversion is obvious on its website. On the first website page, RPC posts Keller’s video titled, “A Church Where Skeptics Are Welcome.” In this video, he encourages doubters and believers to establish a learning community in which they help one another to examine their doubts and faith. Keller

⁵ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Redeemer Vision and Values.”

⁶ Timothy J. Keller, “Keller on Preaching in a Post-Modern City,” *Enigstetroos*, accessed May 7, 2018, <http://enigstetroos.org/Keller.pdf>.

⁷ Timothy J. Keller, *Galatians for You: For Reading, for Feeding, for Leading* (Purcellville, VA: Good Book, 2013), 9.

comments, “I’ve always wanted a church in which believers and doubters could come together and be a learning community; I’ve always wanted a church in which skeptics were really welcomed; that’s one of the reasons why we started Redeemer Presbyterian Church.”⁸ RPC’s dedication to personal conversion will be examined by her evangelism and worship.

Philosophy of Evangelism

Keller asserts that evangelism in a postmodern context should be much more process-oriented, rather than just a one-time event or proclamation. He believes the strong influence of postmodernism makes it difficult for unbelievers to understand the gospel clearly and exactly. Although Christians proclaim the gospel to unbelievers, non-Christians cannot understand the gospel because their minds and worldviews are not prepared. This means that when they hear God, sin, grace, and faith, they comprehend these terms from their worldly point of view. As a result, they misunderstand the gospel.⁹ Keller observes,

In a post-Christendom setting . . . [people] simply do not have the necessary background knowledge to hear a gospel address and immediately understand who God is, what sin is, who Jesus is, and what repentance and faith are in a way that enables them to make an intelligent commitment. They often have far too many objections and beliefs for the gospel to be readily plausible to them.¹⁰

In this situation, Keller claims that unbelievers require not only time to pose questions and build up core gospel concepts, but a Christian community that helps them to experience various expressions of the gospel, too.¹¹ In this community, non-Christians

⁸ Timothy J. Keller, “A Church Where Skeptics Are Welcome,” *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed February 17, 2018, <https://www.redeemer.com>.

⁹ Timothy J. Keller, “Contextual and Missional,” *Christianity Matters*, accessed January 13, 2018, <https://christianitymatters.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/8-contextual-and-missional-by-tim-keller.pdf>.

¹⁰ Timothy J. Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 281.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 317.

come to understand God, sin, and grace through deep relationships with members and leaders. Through this *process*, many of their doubts are set at rest, and they will be able to cross the line into faith and make a commitment.¹²

Keller explains this process by classifying four states—from complete ignorance of the gospel to full commitment to it. The first stage is intelligibility. Don Carson labels this stage “worldview evangelism.”¹³ It means that non-Christians should understand fundamental views about God, sin, and grace to believe in Jesus Christ. The second stage is credibility. This stage is an apologetic process that shows unbelievers their questions and doubts about Christianity are “alternate faith-assertions.”¹⁴ The third stage is plausibility, which concerns contextualization. This stage regards ways unbelievers’ hopes and struggles will be resolved in Jesus Christ.¹⁵ The fourth and final stage is intimacy, which means that non-Christians receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.¹⁶

With this evangelism philosophy, Keller delineates various weaknesses of evangelistic programs. Crusade evangelism, like that of Billy Graham Crusades, has difficulty connecting new believers with local churches. Such lay evangelism training as Evangelism Explosion possesses the weakness of focusing on training very few believers. Weekly home meetings, such as Alpha Course, are helpful for evangelism only when unbelievers have a familiarity with Christianity. If they do not possess any familiarity

¹² Keller, *Center Church*, 281.

¹³ D. A. Carson, “Athens Revisited,” in *Telling the Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

¹⁴ Keller, “Contextual and Missional,” 8. Keller’s apologetics approach will be examined in detail.

¹⁵ Keller’s contextualization will be studied in detail.

¹⁶ Keller, “Contextual and Missional,” 7-8. Although Keller highlights “process evangelism” for unbelievers who are under the influence of postmodernism, he does not deny the importance of putting pressure on the will to “decide now.” Timothy J. Keller, “Evangelism through Networking,” *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed January 31, 2018, http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/Evangelism_through_Networking-Keller.pdf.

with Christianity, it is not highly likely for them to attend weekly meetings for twelve weeks.¹⁷ One of the serious and common problems of these programs is that they frequently jump from the initial stage (intelligibility) to the fourth stage (intimacy) in minutes, with the assumption that non-Christians come from biblical backgrounds. Thus, the methodologies almost ignore the process of an unbeliever's conversion from an atheist to a believer.¹⁸ Keller notes,

Evangelism programs aim at getting people to make a decision to follow Christ. Experience, however, shows us that many of these “decisions” disappear and never result in changed lives. Why? Many decisions are not true spiritual conversions; they are only the beginning of a journey of seeking God. (I must add that some decisions definitely mark the moment of new birth, but this differs from person to person). Many people come to full faith through a process of mini-decisions. Only a person who is hearing the gospel in the context of an ongoing worshipping and shepherding community can be sure of finally coming home into vital, saving faith. Evangelism programs, grafted onto a church that is unable to embrace and support inquirers and doubters, cannot do the job.¹⁹

Therefore, Keller believes that what the world needs is not simply evangelistic programs, but evangelistic churches filled with an evangelism dynamic.

Evangelism Dynamic

Keller contends that evangelistic programs are not helpful for evangelism in a postmodern context unless the church has an evangelistic culture or dynamic.²⁰ His

¹⁷ Timothy J. Keller, “Tim Keller on an Evangelistic Dynamic,” *Redeemer City to City*, accessed February 5, 2018, <https://www.redeemercitytocity.com/citylab/>.

¹⁸ Keller, “Contextual and Missional,” 8. According to Keller, Alpha Course is more desirable than are Crusade evangelism and personal evangelism methods (e.g., Evangelism Explosion and Four Laws) because Alpha Course is more process-oriented and relational than are others. See details. Keller, *Center Church*, 317.

¹⁹ Keller, *Center Church*, 359. In addition, Keller underlines the effectiveness of process evangelism, noting,

Research shows that a) the more varied ways a person hears the gospel, and b) the more often a person hears the gospel before making a commitment, the better the comprehension, the less likely of “reversion” to the world. Many people simply have “process personalities”—they will never come to faith if they are pushed. They need to come in stages. (Keller, “Evangelism through Networking”)

²⁰ Timothy J. Keller, “Our New Global Culture: Ministry in Urban Centers,” *Gospel in Life*, 15, accessed November 14, 2017, <http://www.gospelinlife.com/our-new-global-culture-ministry-in-urban-centers>.

criticisms of evangelistic methodologies do not mean that Keller underestimates the value of evangelistic programs. Rather, he highlights the significance of the evangelistic mind-set of the church. He believes that if the church is permeated with an evangelistic culture, then evangelistic methodologies will be greatly effective.²¹ To create the evangelistic dynamic in the church, Keller suggests four ways: practical theology of evangelism; every-member Word ministry; relational integrity; and developing evangelistic pathways.

Practical theology of evangelism. First of all, Keller presents the practical theology of evangelism, which means that he teaches the direct applicability of the gospel to evangelistic lifestyles. Keller maintains that it is an essential ingredient for building the church into a more evangelistic culture. He elucidates it in four ways. First, the gospel removes pride because grace alone saves all believers. Christians do not do anything to deserve to be God's children. In this sense, no Christian should have pride.²² However, numerous believers hold illegitimate pride over nonbelievers, with the words, "I'm right, you're wrong, and I would love to tell you about it."²³ This mind-set does not have any humility. Secondly, Keller argues that the gospel removes fears. Many individuals in society today tend to concentrate on what others think about them. Under this influence, even believers are worried about other people's disapproval of them. If they understand the gospel, though, they should not hunger for others' approval. They should never be afraid of being perceived as fanatics. Keller remarks that "only if God's approval [in the gospel] is more spiritually real to your heart than anyone else's will you be able not to

²¹ Keller, "Our New Global Culture," 14-15.

²² Keller, "Tim Keller on an Evangelistic Dynamic."

²³ Timothy J. Keller, "Bad Evangelism," *Daily Keller*, accessed February 7, 2018, <http://dailykeller.com/category/evangelism/>.

care what people say about you.”²⁴ Consequently, Keller attests believers must reflect that the gospel is not comforting them as it should if they are still fearful.²⁵

Additionally, Keller claims that the gospel removes pessimism. A common believers’ excuse is, “That person will never accept Christ.” However, Romans 3:10 reads that no one seeks God, including believers and unbelievers. That includes every single believer without any possibility of salvation by his or her own power. Even “that person” can be saved by the Lord alone. Hence, in light of the gospel, the evangelism context does not have any room for pessimism.²⁶

Lastly, the gospel removes indifference or boredom. The gospel gives Christians joy and hope. They could not stay silent with true joy in their hearts. According to Keller, teaching and preaching that the gospel removes pride, fear, pessimism, and indifference are necessary because they are the most common evangelism barriers. Expressing it differently, it is almost impossible for Christians to have a heart for evangelism unless they deal with these four subjects. The gospel is the sole solution to these problems. As a result, Keller contends that pastors should frequently repeat and emphasize these topics to help believers apply the gospel to their hearts.²⁷

Every-member Word ministry. Second, Keller promotes “every-member Word ministry” to create an evangelistic culture. He defines it as “[bringing] the Word of God and especially the gospel into connecting with the mind and heart of another human

²⁴ Timothy J. Keller, “The Lost Ark” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, February 22, 2004), Logos Bible Software.

²⁵ Keller, “Tim Keller on an Evangelistic Dynamic.”

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

being.”²⁸ When Christians do it with a believer, they are edifying and discipling him or her for spiritual growth. When they do it with an unbeliever, they are evangelizing that person. Keller provides RPC’s specific examples of “every-member Word ministry” to clarify its concept:

Jenny begins coming to a small group in the church. She was raised in the church, but she has so many doubts and questions that her group leader, Beth, begins meeting with her one-on-one. They study Bible passages and read books that address each of her questions one after the other.

Fred has been going to a small group for months. At one point he realizes that he assesses the value of the group strictly on what he gets out of it. Instead, he begins to go each week by preparing well (studying the passage) and praying for the group. When he comes, he looks for every opportunity to help the leader by making good contributions and for ways to speak the truth in love so that others are encouraged and helped to grow.

Kerrie is a young mother with two other Christian friends who are moms with young kids. They decide to start a daytime mom’s group and invite non-Christian friends who are also mothers. For about a year the group grows with a similar number of Christians and non-believers. The conversations are very general and free-wheeling on spiritual, marriage, parenting, and personal issues. As time goes on, several of the non-believers begin to go to church with the believers and cross the line into faith. The group continues to be open and inclusive of non-believers who come regularly.²⁹

“Every-member Word ministry” in RPC, according to Keller, has four common characteristics. First, it is organic because it occurs spontaneously. Although it occasionally brings about formal and organized programs in the church, most cases happen outside the formal programs. Second, it is relational. Its context is believers’ personal relationships. In addition, it is Word-deploying because believers prayerfully deliver the Word and the gospel to their relationships. Finally, it is active—not passive. People’s attitude in Keller’s examples demonstrates that they are willing to take personal

²⁸ Timothy J. Keller, “A Church with an Evangelistic Dynamic,” *Redeemer City to City*, accessed January 13, 2018, <https://learn.redeemercitytocity.com/library/missional-ministry/68122/path/step/17089409/>.

²⁹ Ibid. Keller provides thirteen examples of “every-member Word ministry,” as well. See Keller, *Center Church*, 279-80.

responsibility for being producers of ministry, rather than being consumers of ministry.³⁰ Based on his ministry experience, Keller maintains that when at least 15 to 30 percent of a church's members are involved in organic, relational, Word-deploying, and active lay gospel ministry, a strong dynamism is produced that can drive an entire church for active edification and strong evangelism.³¹ He comments,

Lay ministers counsel, encourage, instruct, disciple, and witness with both Christian and non-Christian individuals. They involve themselves in the lives of others so they might come to faith or grow in grace. Then a certain percentage of the people served by these lay ministers come into the lay ministry community as well, and the church grows in quality and quantity.³²

Relational integrity. Third, Keller helps believers to have relational integrity for creating an evangelistic culture. He explains relational integrity in the three senses of likeness, unlikeness, and participation: "We will have an impact for the gospel if we *like* those around us yet profoundly different and *unlike* them at the same time, all the while remaining very visible and *engaged*" (emphasis in original).³³ Believers' likeness to nonbelievers helps unbelievers think that the Christian faith is relevant to their world. It makes it possible for them to see what they can look like if they become Christians, as well. According to Keller, Christians' unlikeness to non-Christians enables them to be interested in knowing the Christian faith just like pagans were fascinated by early Christianity due to its concern for the poor, integrity under persecution, and sacrificial love even for enemies.³⁴ Finally, from Keller's perspective, engaging neighbors means not merely that believers strive to build non-superficial relationships with colleagues,

³⁰ Keller, *Center Church*, 280.

³¹ Keller, "A Church with an Evangelistic Dynamic." In *Center Church*, Keller tells that at least 20 to 25 percent of Christians in a church are needed for the evangelistic culture. See Keller, *Center Church*, 280.

³² Keller, *Center Church*, 281.

³³ *Ibid.*, 282.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 284-85.

neighbors, and other affinity groups, but additionally that they pray for and think seriously about spiritual needs of people around them.³⁵

He holds that pastors are required to experience personal connections with lay ministers to promote their relational integrity. Although there is a variety of barriers of “every-member gospel ministry” (e.g., lack of motivation, lack of compassion, lack of ability and knowledge), a personal connection with pastors can overcome these difficulties. This intimate connection, according to Keller, does not take place primarily through formal evangelism lectures. Instead, pastors’ informal teaching and ongoing personal advice create it. Moreover, pastors must show their relational integrity to lay ministers through personal relationships. Pastors’ living examples about ways to sacrifice their lives for nonbelievers, share faith with them, and pray for them help lay ministers to understand how Christians reach out to their friends.³⁶ Keller observes, “The single most important way for pastors or church leaders to turn passive laypeople into courageous and gracious lay ministers is through their own evident godliness.”³⁷ Furthermore, he highlights the significance of enabling lay ministers to be equipped with answering field questions about issues that they might encounter in discussion with non-Christians.³⁸

Developing evangelistic pathways. Finally, Keller designs a graded evangelism inclusivity. The fact that RPC accentuates an organic, relational, and informal approach to evangelism does not mean that it ignores varied formal events and meetings in which non-Christians are exposed to believers and the gospel. RPC practices seven levels of evangelism.

³⁵ Keller, “A Church with an Evangelistic Dynamic.”

³⁶ Keller, *Center Church*, 285-86.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 288.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 287.

1. A level: a neighborhood service project (in which the gospel is not presented, but participants would know it is from church).
2. B level: an event of broad interest to many people, in which Christianity is perceived in quite a general and positive light. For instance, a person could explain his or her life, or share an experience about how he or she became a Christian.
3. C level: an event of more narrow interest to an infinitive group of people, such as mothers, businessmen, or students with the same major. They are interested in other individuals in the same area. Appealing to their shared interest will gain their attention, and is an opportunity to bond with those who are not Christians.
4. D level: equal-time events, in which Christians and non-Christians debate Christianity with the same amount of speaking time.
5. E level: answering objections to Christianity. A Christian speaker responds to questions and objections.
6. F level: regular attendance at an event or a Christian service. At this level, non-Christians want to join, or have curiosity about, Christianity. This level is very advanced.
7. G level: preaching the gospel. Traditional evangelism happens at this level. Most evangelism programs focus on this level alone (such as Evangelism Explosion or Four Spiritual Laws).³⁹

Keller highlights a basement, which is foundational to all seven levels. Only members who endeavor to make connections with their non-Christian friends can establish this basement. In addition, he delineates that these evangelism levels can be accomplished without a budget, and church size does not matter.⁴⁰

Two Aspects of Sharing the Gospel

Keller thinks there are two aspects of sharing the gospel. The first aspect is a more negative part, which is deeply connected with apologetics; the other one is a more positive aspect, which concerns contextualization.⁴¹

³⁹ Timothy J. Keller, “City Lab 3: Tim Keller on Evangelistic Pathways,” *Redeemer City to City*, accessed February 15, 2018, <https://www.redeemercitycity.com/citylab/>. Moreover, Keller articulates a number of safe venues for evangelism. See Keller, *Center Church*, 288-89.

⁴⁰ Keller, “City Lab 3.”

⁴¹ Timothy J. Keller, “Deconstructing Defeater Beliefs: Leading the Secular to Christ,” *The Gospel Coalition*, accessed February 9, 2018, <http://resources.thegospelcoalition.org/library/deconstructing-defeater-beliefs-leading-the-secular-to-christ>.

Apologetics approach.⁴² Keller feels that apologetics is one of two aspects for sharing the gospel. He maintains that it is almost unavoidable for Christians to use apologetics in an evangelism context. This unavoidability is present because they live in a post-Christendom context, in which people do not value and have biblical perspectives. Thus, unbelievers want to know the reason they should believe the gospel. According to him, one of the common mistakes that Christians make is that they do not recognize the necessity of answering the “why” question after they share the gospel. Keller posits,

Apologetics is an answer to the “why” question after you’ve already given people an answer to the “what” question. The what question, of course, is “What is the gospel?” But when you call people to believe in the gospel and they ask, “Why should I believe that?”—then you need apologetics. I’ve heard plenty of Christians try to answer the *why* question by going back to the *what*. “You have to believe because Jesus is the Son of God.” But that’s answering the why with more what (emphasis in original).⁴³

To present reasons that non-Christians believe, Keller attempts to illustrate that their objections to Christianity are based on faith, as well.⁴⁴ Phrasing it differently, those with doubts regarding Christianity are questioning Christianity on the basis of alternate

⁴² Keller frequently teaches and preaches with an apologetical approach to unbelievers and believers. For example, in 2001, he presented a five-week series called “Arguing with Jesus,” which includes such titles as “Arguing about the Afterlife,” “Arguing about Morality,” “Arguing about Politics,” and “The Ultimate Argument.” Furthermore, in 2006, he spent a six-week series called “The Trouble with Christianity: Why It’s So Hard to Believe It,” which consists of titles like “Exclusivity: How Can There Be Just One True Religion?” “Suffering: If God Is Good, Why Is There So Much Evil in the World?” and “Absolutism: Don’t We All Have to Find Truth for Ourselves?” In most of his sermons Keller attempts to devote one of the three or four major sermon points to non-Christians. For this point he addresses the most common objections unbelievers hold against Christianity. See details Timothy J. Keller, “City Lab 1: Evangelistic Worship by Tim Keller,” *Redeemer City to City*, accessed February 13, 2018, <https://www.redeemercitytocity.com/citylab/>. Timothy J. Keller, “Preaching in a Secular Culture,” *Gospel in Life*, 2, accessed February 9, 2018, <https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/preaching-in-a-secular-culture/>.

⁴³ Timothy J. Keller, “How the Gospel Changes Our Apologetics, Part 1,” *Timothy Keller*, accessed February 8, 2018, <http://www.timothykeller.com/blog/2012/7/10/how-the-gospel-changes-our-apologetics-part-1>.

⁴⁴ Timothy J. Keller, “How the Gospel Changes Our Apologetics, Part 2,” *Timothy Keller*, accessed February 8, 2018, <http://www.timothykeller.com/blog/2012/7/24/how-the-gospel-changes-our-apologetics-part-2>.

beliefs, not facts or not even truth.⁴⁵ He defines a fact as either “a) something that is self-evident to virtually everyone (e.g., There’s a rock in the road) or b) something that is not self-evident to the senses but can be proved scientifically.”⁴⁶ According to this definition, when “A assertion” cannot be demonstrated in either of those definitions, “A assertion” is an act of faith—not a fact. Keller clarifies this idea with a number of examples:

The person who says, “I can only believe in something if it can be rationally or empirically proven” must realize that that in itself is a statement of faith. This “verification principle” cannot actually be proven rationally or empirically, making it an assertion or a claim, not an argument. Furthermore, there are all sorts of things you can’t prove rationally or empirically. You can’t prove to me that you’re not really a butterfly dreaming you’re a person. (Haven’t you seen *The Matrix*?) You can’t prove most of the things you believe, so at least recognize that you have faith.⁴⁷

Keller’s apologetics begin with assisting unbelievers to realize they have less warrant for their beliefs than Christians do for the Christian faith. This approach means that it takes faith even to doubt Christianity because it is not possible to doubt Christianity without a view of faith in B belief.⁴⁸ In this situation, Keller claims that it is not fair or correct for skeptics to require more reasonable arguments for the Christian faith than they need for their own: “My thesis is that if you come to recognize the beliefs on which your doubts about Christianity are based, and if you seek as much proof for those beliefs as you seek from Christians for theirs—you will discover that your doubts are not as solid as

⁴⁵ Timothy J. Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Penguin, 2009), xviii.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 244.

⁴⁷ Keller, “How the Gospel Changes Our Apologetics, Part 2.” In *The Reason for God*, Keller also provides seven detailed examples of his apologetical approach to skeptics. In addition, he expounds six common defeaters that are grounds for denying the plausibility of Christianity and illustrates ways to deconstruct them. See Keller, “Deconstructing Defeater Beliefs.”

⁴⁸ Keller, *The Reason for God*, xviii.

they first appeared.”⁴⁹ Expressing it differently, he contends that nonbelievers must doubt their own doubts to doubt Christianity fairly.⁵⁰

Contextualization. Keller thinks that contextualization is one of two significant parts of sharing the gospel.⁵¹ He argues for the unavoidability of contextualizing the gospel in a particular culture. He supports his contention by citing Carson’s argument pertaining to universal truth in a culture.⁵² Carson insists, “No truth which human beings may articulate can ever be articulated in a cultural transcending-way . . . that does not mean that the truth thus articulated does not transcend culture.”⁵³ According to Keller, Carson’s assertion shows a critical and healthy balance between two points. First of all, there is no culture-free way of communicating the gospel. Because all languages have cultural relics, believers’ gospel presentation is culturally influenced; consequently, contextualization is required to present the gospel faithfully. Second, while there is no universal way to present the gospel to all people, there is the true and absolute gospel, which is not a cultural artifact. The gospel message itself is universal and is not a product of a culture.⁵⁴ In other words, for Keller, contextualization is inevitable to communicate the unchanging gospel to sinners in a particular culture. He highlighted the necessity of contextualizing the gospel when he celebrated RPC’s twenty-fifth anniversary in September 2014. Keller states,

⁴⁹ Keller, *The Reason for God*, xix.

⁵⁰ Two scholars evaluate and analyze Keller’s apologetical sermons. See Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church: Our Own Time* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 7:153-58. Travis Allen Freeman, “Preaching to Provoke a Worldview Change: Tim Keller’s Use of Presuppositional Apologetics in Preaching” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012).

⁵¹ Keller, “Deconstructing Defeater Beliefs.”

⁵² Keller, *Center Church*, 93.

⁵³ D. A. Carson, “Maintaining Scientific and Christian Truths in a Postmodern World,” *Science & Christian Belief* 14, no. 2 (October 2002): 118.

⁵⁴ Keller, *Center Church*, 93-94.

Redeemer. . . must change in order to stay the same. If we are to continue to lift up Christ in a compelling way to New Yorkers as we have in the past, Redeemer will have to change The essence of Christian belief and the gospel . . . are what binds the church together from age to age. The church is therefore “differently the same.” In its core commitments . . . it is the same, and yet takes different forms in different cultures.⁵⁵

He comprehends the contextualization in terms of two aspects: retaining the essential gospel message and adapting any nonessential languages.⁵⁶ This understanding is clear in his contextualization definition:

[It] “incarnates” the gospel into a new culture. It is the process by which we present the gospel to people of a particular world-view, in forms that the hearers can understand. It is adapting gospel ministry from one culture into another culture without compromising the gospel. True contextualization, then, is concerned to *both* challenge the culture and to connect and to adapt to it, for if we fail to do either, we obscure and lose the gospel, either by identifying it too much with the new culture or by identifying it too much with the older one⁵⁷ (emphasis in original).

Keller’s definition clarifies that contextualization does not concern modifying the core gospel message, but regards taking different forms to aid listeners in understanding the core message plainly and precisely. In other words, the purpose of contextualization is not offering what unbelievers want to listen to, but helping them to comprehend clearly exactly what God says. In this sense, Keller says, “The gospel has to be communicated in fresh ways in order to both defy and resonate with its listeners.”⁵⁸

Keller recommends a map for practical contextualization. First, he maintains that it is a matter of order. Some doctrines are more logically fundamental than are others. For instance, Christians do not have to press a sinner to believe in Christ’s second coming if he or she does not believe in the deity of Jesus. To convince unbelievers about

⁵⁵ Timothy J. Keller, “Differently the Same: Redeemer’s Next Twenty-Five Years,” *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed January 9, 2018, https://www.redeemer.com/redeemer-report/article/differently_the_same_redeemers_next_twenty_five_years.

⁵⁶ Timothy J. Keller, “Advancing the Gospel in the Twenty-First Century,” *Gospel in Life*, 7, accessed March 30, 2018, <https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/advancing-the-gospel-in-the-21st-century/>.

⁵⁷ Keller, “Contextual and Missional,” 10.

⁵⁸ Keller, “Differently the Same.”

less fundamental doctrines, believers should focus initially on the more basic ones. Then, Keller asks believers to recognize more plausible doctrines for a culture among those basic doctrines.⁵⁹ According to Keller, some beliefs make sense to a culture more than do others due to God's common grace. Keller calls more convincing doctrines A-doctrines, and he terms more offensive doctrines B-doctrines.⁶⁰ He describes that it is effective for believers to explain B-beliefs to non-Christians based on A-beliefs, noting, "A beliefs and doctrines . . . will become the premises, the jumping-off points, for challenging the culture."⁶¹ Keller summarizes his approach to contextualization in the following manner: "In general, in any effective communication, you should lead with the more comprehensible doctrines, securing assent there first. Then you should use their agreement on those truths to push them toward the others, the more difficult or offensive doctrines. Show them it is inconsistent to hold the first ones without being open to the others."⁶² From Keller's viewpoint, contextualization is a matter of order: more fundamental doctrines first, to be followed later by more plausible doctrines.

Second, contextualization is a matter of emphasis. According to Keller, the Bible clarifies fundamental doctrines with many themes, saying that "the Bible has many images and ways to talk about sin, many ways to talk about the meaning of the cross."⁶³ For example, the Bible possesses several different atonement images: the battlefield (Christ defeats the power of Satan for us); the marketplace (Jesus pays the price of sin to free us from the bondage of enslavement); exile (Christ is banished for us, so that we who deserve to be exiled could be brought in); the temple (Jesus is the final sacrifice who

⁵⁹ Keller, "Contextual and Missional," 15.

⁶⁰ Keller, *Center Church*, 123.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁶² Keller, "Contextual and Missional," 15.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

makes us pure in the eyes of the holy God); and the law court (Christ takes all guilt and punishment we are supposed to bear).⁶⁴ While it is necessary for Christians to teach every atonement image in the Scriptures, it is not wise for them to communicate the gospel with the most implausible image to nonbelievers. Keller attests,

It is sometimes implied we can choose which of these models we prefer and ignore the others, but this is misleading. Each way of communicating the atonement reflects a piece of inspired Scripture, and each tells us great things about our salvation that the others do not bring out as clearly. Each will have special resonance with certain temperaments and cultures. People who are fighting oppression or even enslavement and long for freedom will be helped by the first two [images] (the battlefield and the marketplace). People seeking relief for guilt and a sense of shame will be especially moved by the last two.⁶⁵

His assertion underlines not only that Christians should teach the whole counsel of God, but that they must emphasize certain biblical themes that resonate deeply and connect well to baseline cultural narratives, too. In this sense, contextualization, for Keller, is a matter of emphasis.

Finally, he insists that contextualization follows “an enter-challenge-reestablish approach.”⁶⁶ The first step in contextualization is entering the culture. It means that Christians make an effort to understand the culture.⁶⁷ Comprehending the culture can be articulated in two aspects: immersing and discerning. The former implies that believers identify with people whom they are endeavoring to reach. In this process, their articulation about nonbelievers’ aspirations, hopes, and fears needs to be better than that of non-Christians, so the Christians can gain credibility from the unconverted. The discernment indicates that Christians can adapt parts of the cultural values that are similar

⁶⁴ Keller, *Center Church*, 130.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 130-31.

⁶⁶ Keller, “Contextual and Missional,” 17.

⁶⁷ Keller, *Center Church*, 120.

to scriptural worldviews or values.⁶⁸ In other words, believers must distinguish A doctrines from B doctrines.⁶⁹

The second contextualization step is challenging the culture, which implies that Christians challenge the culture based on a matter of order and of emphasis. The main focus of a challenge is that if those who admit the legitimacy of A-doctrines deny B-doctrines, believers show nonbelievers' inconsistency because A and B doctrines are interdependent and equally true.⁷⁰ Keller presents a case of human rights as an instance of this type:

The average college student is not an atheist, but a rather squishy agnostic. They don't think people can know if there is a God but they are vehement that it is wrong to oppress and starve the poor. But if you show them that it is very hard to demand that others respect human rights if there is no God and we just evolved through the strong eating the weak, you now have created a crisis for them. You are challenging their framework.⁷¹

In this example, Keller creates a case supporting B-belief (God exists) on the basis of A-belief (human beings have dignity). Without the existence of the Lord, the Creator, humanity cannot have human rights and dignity that unbelievers value. In other words, the focus of a challenge is showing unbelievers' inconsistency.

Moreover, Keller presents idolatry as yet another example of a challenge. When he started ministry in Manhattan, young people under the influence of postmodernism were allergic to the Christian concept of sin, which is a violation of God's law. In this situation, he found that biblical teachings pertaining to idolatry helped him make a case that supports B-doctrine (you are a sinner) based on a plausible A-doctrine (you were created to be free). While, in current Western society, individuals highly value a free

⁶⁸ Keller, "Contextual and Missional," 17.

⁶⁹ According to Keller, while A-doctrines refer to Christian beliefs that make sense to people in a culture, B-doctrines are quite offensive to them. See Keller, *Center Church*, 124.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Keller, "Contextual and Missional," 17.

person, they are actually in bondage of pursuit for reputation, success, and wealth. Many of them experience misery, addiction, anxiety, and breakdown in their lives. According to Keller, the reason they are under enslavement is making their idols to be more important than is God.⁷² In other words, Keller explains sin to New Yorkers in terms of building life's meaning on anything more than on the Lord, which is idolatry and sin. This idolatry concept implies that, paradoxically, postmodern people—who do not love God more than anything and anyone—can never be free as they want to be. Phrasing it positively, only when they offer the utmost love to their Creator are they truly free. Wording it differently, the only way to be free is admitting that they are sinners under the bondage of sin.⁷³

The last contextualization step is reestablishing the culture in the gospel. In this step, Christians demonstrate that what nonbelievers are looking forward to experiencing can be found only in Jesus Christ.⁷⁴ Based on 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16—in which Paul entered a culture, challenged its idols, and consoled the listeners in the gospel—Keller holds that Christians must show that Christ alone will fulfill unbelievers' cultural aspirations and hopes.⁷⁵ He notes,

Having entered a culture and challenged its idols, we should follow the apostle Paul in presenting Christ to our listeners as the ultimate source of what they have been seeking. When we enter a culture with care, we earn the ability to speak to it. Then, after we challenge a culture's belief framework, our listeners will feel destabilized. Now in this final stage of contextualization, we can reestablish equilibrium. Having confronted, we now console, showing them that . . . the plotlines of their lives can only find a resolution, a "happy ending," in Jesus. *We must retell the culture's story in Jesus* (emphasis in original).⁷⁶

⁷² Keller feels idolatry is the essence of sin, describing that "idolatry is at the root of all sin." Timothy J. Keller, "Preaching the Gospel to the Heart," *Squarespace*, 11, accessed November 1, 2017, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5315f2e5e4b04a00bc148f24/t/55e0c99ee4b0f4b11e1cf5c0/1440795038107/Preaching+the+Gospel+to+the+Heart.pdf>.

⁷³ Keller, *Center Church*, 127.

⁷⁴ Keller, "Contextual and Missional," 17.

⁷⁵ Keller, "Deconstructing Defeater Beliefs."

⁷⁶ Keller, *Center Church*, 130.

Putting it differently, the gospel, according to Keller, should challenge and recreate the culture. Without this step, the idols of the listeners' culture are still working in them. As a result, they basically experience "a cultural conversion" (adapting Christianized culture, not Jesus as Savior and Lord).⁷⁷

Worship

Keller argues that the weekly worship service can work for both evangelism for unbelievers and edification for believers: "My thesis is that the weekly worship service can be very effective in evangelism of non-Christians *and* in edification of Christians if it does not aim at either alone but is gospel-centered and in the vernacular (emphasis in original)."⁷⁸ He terms this type of worship "evangelistic worship."⁷⁹

Evangelistic worship. Keller insists that the ultimate service focus is not evangelism and edification, but worshipping God, mentioning that "the goals of evangelism and edification are subordinate to the goal of worship."⁸⁰ The weekly service can work for evangelism and edification if the service objective is worshipping the Lord. If not, the weekly service works for either one, but not for both of them. On the one hand, he critiques the contemporary worship, or seeker-sensitive, service. Its emphasis is unbelievers' evangelism, so that it is difficult to edify Christians. On the other hand, he delineates that the historic or traditional worship concentrates on believers' edification. As a result, it is not easy to evangelize sinners.⁸¹ Unlike these two worship approaches,

⁷⁷ Keller, "Our New Global Culture," 19.

⁷⁸ Keller, *Center Church*, 302.

⁷⁹ Keller, "City Lab 1."

⁸⁰ Timothy J. Keller, "A Model for Preaching: Part 1," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 13, no. 1 (1994): 37.

⁸¹ Concerning Keller critics regarding both approaches to worship, see Timothy J. Keller, "Evangelistic Worship," *Redeemer City to City*, 1-5, accessed January 10, 2018,

according to Keller, if the focus of the service is worshipping God, that service can simultaneously edify Christians and evangelize nonbelievers.⁸²

He maintains that “evangelistic worship” is rooted in biblical grounds. In the OT, God asked Israel to call the nations to join in praising the Lord’s glory. Jerusalem is the center of world worship (Isa 2:2-4; 56:6-8). Psalm 105:1-2 reads that “make known among the nations what [God] has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.” According to Keller, these verses illustrate that God commanded the people to praise the Lord before all the nations, including unbelieving nations. (See also Ps 47:2; 100:1-5.)⁸³ In addition, Keller argues for the legitimacy of “evangelistic worship” based on 1 Corinthians 14:23-25 and Acts 2. Examining two passages, he finds three facts with respect to Christian worship: (1) unbelievers were present in worship; (2) believers’ praise was comprehensible to non-Christians; and (3) the converted experienced their conversion through comprehensible Christian worship.⁸⁴ Keller thus concludes biblical and theological grounds of “evangelistic worship” with these words: “We are called not simply to communicate the gospel to nonbelievers; we must also intentionally celebrate the gospel *before* them” (emphasis in original).⁸⁵

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5315f2e5e4b04a00bc148f24/t/537a726be4b0d45559686db1/1400533611277/Evangelistic_Worship.pdf.

⁸² Keller, “City Lab 1.” Keller learned about the evangelistic-worship concept from one of his mentors, Edmund P. Clowney. Clowney argued for “doxological evangelism,” which implies that “the gospel message is celebration before it is communication.” He maintained that believers’ “praises of [God] who called [them] out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Pet 2:9)” are evangelism to unbelievers in the worship context because, during the worship, non-Christians see what God has done for sinners through Christians’ praises. See details pertaining to “doxological evangelism.” Edmund P. Clowney, “Kingdom Evangelism,” in *The Pastor-Evangelist: Preacher, Model, and Mobilizer for Church Growth*, ed. Roger S. Greenway (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987), 23-24.

⁸³ Keller, “Evangelistic Worship,” 5.

⁸⁴ In terms of conversion time, Keller delineates the difference between 1 Cor 14 and Acts 2. In the former, conversion happened during the service, but in the latter unbelievers experienced conversion after meetings through Peter’s follow-up evangelism. See Keller, *Center Church*, 302-3.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 303.

Keller recommends three practical tasks for cultivating evangelistic worship. First of all, pastors need to think that dozens or hundreds of skeptics are already in the church, even though there is no unbeliever in the church. The sole way to bring unbelievers to church is through a personal invitation from church members.⁸⁶ Members will invite their friends to the service if they already feel that a weekly service is a *safe* place for unbelievers. If not, they will not bring friends to the service, and a vicious circle begins.⁸⁷ Because pastors know there are only believers in the church, they do not have enough motivation for making the service comprehensible to unbelievers. And then, church members avoid inviting friends to the church, which is not a safe place for non-Christians.⁸⁸

Additionally, pastors ought to make worship comprehensible to non-Christians. The evangelistic-worship goal is not to make them comfortable, but to help them recognize what is taking place in Christian worship. To achieve this goal, Keller presents seven ways: “(1) worship and preach in the vernacular; (2) explain the service as you go along; (3) directly address and welcome nonbelievers; (4) cultivate high-quality aesthetics; (5) celebrate deeds of mercy and justice; (6) present the sacraments in ways that make the gospel clear; and (7) preach grace.”⁸⁹

Finally, pastors must furnish non-Christians opportunities of responding to the gospel in two ways: (1) in the service and (2) during meetings after the service. Two major chances to receive Christ occur during the service. Initially, RPC asks people to

⁸⁶ Keller, “Evangelistic Worship,” 6–7.

⁸⁷ According to Keller, the word *safe* means that the church avoids two common dangers: (1) confusing non-Christians—by assuming that they possess theological or ecclesiastical backgrounds; and (2) offending them—by placing unnecessary barriers before them. Keller, “A Church with an Evangelistic Dynamic.”

⁸⁸ Keller, *Center Church*, 304.

⁸⁹ Keller, “Evangelistic Worship”; Keller, “City Lab 1.”

receive Jesus as Christ when the Lord's Supper is distributed. RPC clarifies that those who do not believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord cannot receive the bread and the cup. And then, RPC encourages them to consider their relationship with Christ in prayer.⁹⁰ To assist them in meditating on their relationship with Jesus and the church, RPC provides three prayer forms for those who are not receiving the Lord's Supper in its weekly bulletin.⁹¹ In the bulletin, RPC encourages those who accept Christ the first time with these prayers to share with a church leader up front or to notify one of the pastors.⁹² Second, RPC helps individuals receive Christ by providing them a time of silence, with a musical interlude, after a sermon and by placing the offering after the silent time. This worship structure makes it feasible for people not just to meditate on what they have heard, but additionally to dedicate themselves to God in prayer.⁹³

RPC leads people to commitment to Christ by means of meetings following the service. Keller maintains that, historically and practically, it is effective to invite individuals to commitment to Christ after meetings because convicted unbelievers are

⁹⁰ Keller, "Evangelistic Worship."

⁹¹ The weekly bulletin reads,

(1) Prayer for Those Searching for Truth. Lord Jesus, you claim to be the way, the truth, and the life. Grant that I might be undaunted by the cost of following you as I consider the reasons for doing so. If what you claim is true, please guide me, teach me, and open me to the reality of who you are. Give me an understanding of you that is coherent, convincing, and that leads to the life you promise. Amen; (2) Prayer of Belief. Lord Jesus Christ, I admit that I am weaker and more sinful than I ever dared admit, but through you I am more loved and accepted than I ever dared hope. I thank you for paying my debt on the cross, taking what I deserved in order to offer me complete forgiveness. Knowing that you have been raised from the dead, I turn from my sins and receive you, my Savior and Lord. Amen; (3) Prayer of Commitment. Lord Jesus, you have called us to follow you in baptism and in a life of committed discipleship through membership in your church. Grant that I may take the necessary steps to be one with your people, and live in the fullness of your Spirit. Amen. (Redeemer Presbyterian Church Downtown Side, "Weekly Bulletin" [Redeemer Presbyterian Church Downtown Side, New York, January 21, 2018])

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Keller, "Evangelistic Worship." In January 2018, I attended RPC services four times (two times in the East Side, one time in the West Side, and one time Downtown) and ascertained that all services exhibited the same structure.

frequently the most acceptable and open to the gospel.⁹⁴ Numerous forms of meetings happen after service. First, just before the benediction, a pastor makes the announcement, “If you have a personal question, a practical need or would like to pray with someone, come forward to the front to meet deacons and deaconesses after the benediction.” Second, RPC hosts a question-and-answer session with the preacher. Third, RPC sometimes offers small groups to unbelievers for replying to their questions about Christianity and guiding them to Christ.⁹⁵

Evangelistic preaching. Keller contends that because the gospel is the root of both justification (unbelievers) and sanctification (believers), gospel-centered preaching is required for evangelistic worship, which is aimed at both believers and nonbelievers.⁹⁶ He suggests crucial ways for evangelistic preaching. First of all, Keller makes an effort to get to Jesus Christ from sermons no matter what texts.⁹⁷ Based on Luke 24:27, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself,” Keller affirms that every single biblical text pertains to Jesus Christ and that the entire Bible features the central plot of God’s salvation through Christ Jesus. Therefore, according to Keller, every part of the Scriptures can and must be placed within the central plot no matter whether a pastor conducts exposition of Deuteronomy or Proverbs. In this sense, Keller describes, “Every sermon is a story in

⁹⁴ Keller, *Center Church*, 306.

⁹⁵ Keller, “Evangelistic Worship,” 9-10.

⁹⁶ Keller, “Preaching in a Secular Culture,” 1. Keller also articulates the significance of evangelistic preaching for evangelistic worship. See Keller, “Evangelistic Worship,” 8-9.

⁹⁷ Timothy J. Keller, “City Lab 5: Evangelistic Preaching,” *Redeemer City to City*, accessed February 14, 2018, <https://www.redeemercitytocity.com/citylab/>. In *Preaching*, Keller describes ways to develop “Christ-centered exposition.” Timothy J. Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 70-90.

which the plot of the human dilemma thickens and the hero who comes to the rescue is Jesus.”⁹⁸

Second, Keller solves the heart problem with the gospel.⁹⁹ This way implies that, with the gospel power, he attacks pride, fear, and false identity originated from *sin*, which is underneath behavioral *sins*.¹⁰⁰ By striking sin through the gospel, he solves the heart problem—not merely behavioral wrongdoing. The gospel edifies believers every week in the process of dealing with sin underneath sins. In addition, unbelievers are continually exposed to the gospel in its most practical and relevant ways.¹⁰¹ As a result of a number of exposures to the gospel from numerous perspectives, non-Christians gradually understand the gospel clearly and exactly: evangelism. In this sense, gospel-centered preaching works for both edification and evangelism.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Keller, “Our New Global Culture,” 10. According to Keller, a structure of the morality-focused preaching—“(1) Here is what the text says. (2) Here is how we must live in light of that text. (3) Now go, and live that way, and God will help you”—is totally different from a structure of the Christ-centered preaching, which highlights Christ’s work: “(1) Here is what the text says. (2) Here is how we must live in light of it. (3) But we simply cannot do it. (4) Ah—but there is One who did! (5) Now through faith in him, you can begin to live this way.” Keller, “Preaching in a Secular Culture,” 4-6.

⁹⁹ Keller, “City Lab 5.”

¹⁰⁰ Timothy J. Keller, “Anatomy of Sin—Part 2” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, January 29, 1992), Logos Bible Software. The third chapter of “Good News of Changed Lives” has already addressed this topic. See examples of ways Keller applies the gospel to specific issues of racism, stinginess, and marriage.

¹⁰¹ Keller, “Our New Global Culture,” 12.

¹⁰² Keller presents four other ways for preaching to be evangelistic besides the two listed above: “(3) utilizing people’s premise against them; (4) showing understanding about how difficult it is to believe; (5) addressing non-Christians in the sermon; and (6) connecting individuals’ deepest aspirations or hopes.” Because the first and second ways are the most crucial for comprehending gospel-centered preaching, these others are articulated here. The third and sixth are related to the issue of contextualization, which has been studied in “Two Aspects of Sharing the Gospel.” The fourth and fifth are quite straightforward. See Keller, “City Lab 5.”

Community Formation: Connecting People to One Another

Keller states that because the gospel changes human hearts and identities, the gospel creates a new kind of community, which is radically different from any world society.¹⁰³ In other words, because the gospel promotes or results in spiritual growth through grace (discipleship), a Christian community—which consists of individual believers—is becoming a countercultural community, in which the world observes complete differences the gospel makes. In this sense, community formation can furthermore be called discipleship at RPC.¹⁰⁴ Keller articulates a direct connection between community formation and discipleship:

We are a church that seeks to provide spiritual formation primarily through *community*. People who get an A on a doctrinal exam can still be mired in spiritual blindness and deadness—unless the implications of the gospel are worked out practically through continual refection, admonition, and modeling in community. Growth in grace and wisdom and character does not happen so much in classes as in deep family-type relationships and countercultural communities where the gospel’s distinct implications are lived out. A strong individualistic strain exists in Western Christianity, so that often people will drop in to church for inspiration but will not give of themselves in service to the city or in community to one another. Only a deep commitment to community will work the gospel into every part of our lives (emphasis in original).¹⁰⁵

This section will articulate how the gospel shapes a Christian community and address ways RPC promotes Community Group Fellowship. It will then examine RPC discipleship tools.

The Gospel, the Foundation of a Christian Community

Keller clarifies that the gospel is the fundamental ground of community

¹⁰³ Keller, *Center Church*, 311.

¹⁰⁴ Redeemer City to City, “Overview and Learning Objectives for Connecting People to One Another,” *Redeemer City to City*, accessed February 19, 2018, <https://learn.redeemercitytocity.com/library/missional-ministry/68122/path/step/13029387/>.

¹⁰⁵ Keller, “Five Ministry Fronts in the City.”

formation in three senses.¹⁰⁶ First, he explains that humanity's relationship with the Lord determines human relationships with others, based on the grand scriptural narrative, saying that "when your relationship with [God] unravels, all other relationships unravel, and when a relationship with [God] is restored, that restores all other human relationships."¹⁰⁷ In other words, from Keller's viewpoint, there is biblically no central ground of building a true Christian community without restoring the relationship with the Lord through the gospel.

In addition, Keller maintains that experiencing Christ's sacrificial love manifested in the gospel forms a Christian community because, practically, shared experience naturally forms a community. The fact that battle or flood survivors tend to have a deep, stronger bond than does a family implies that the more intense is shared experience, the more extraordinary is community.¹⁰⁸ According to Keller, the most intense experience that humanity has ever had is the gospel encounter, in which human beings know and experience the radical grace of Jesus. This experience is so intense that Christians can be united with others with a distinctly different social class, race, or culture. This bond is formed because Christians realize that their identity is based much more on who they are in Christ, just like other believers, than on their racial or social class.¹⁰⁹ This kind of tie never happens outside of Christ.

¹⁰⁶ Timothy J. Keller, "Spiritual Friendship" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, March 1, 1998), Logos Bible Software.

¹⁰⁷ Timothy J. Keller, "The Community of Jesus" (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, January 19, 2003), Logos Bible Software.

¹⁰⁸ Keller, *Center Church*, 319.

¹⁰⁹ Timothy J. Keller, "The Difficulty of Community," *Timothy Keller*, accessed February 20, 2018, <http://www.timothykeller.com/blog/2008/10/1/the-difficulty-of-community>.

Finally, Keller expresses that the gospel destroys a variety of barriers to community formation.¹¹⁰ He acknowledges the difficulties of establishing a true Christian community: “The reason there are so many exhortations in the NT for Christians to love other Christians is because the church is not made up of natural friends; it’s made up of natural enemies.”¹¹¹ However, he is confident that gospel power can knock down the obstacles: “Our weapon is the gospel itself,”¹¹² and “here’s what the church is: a band of natural enemies who love one other *for Jesus’ sake*” (emphasis added). In other words, according to Keller, although born-again Christians are still self-centered and self-absorbed, Christ’s sacrificial love on the cross can make them please Jesus and others.¹¹³

Keller illustrates ways the gospel helps build a genuine Christian community; the gospel breaks down barriers that separate people because it attacks sin underneath sins.¹¹⁴ Human beings’ natural condition under sin is eager to glorify themselves—honor and a sense of worth. Sin makes humanity feel superior (evident pride) or inferior (self-disdaining).¹¹⁵ The gospel discloses that those who feel superior are not better at all than others whom they consider to be inferior because all are sinners and are saved only by grace—not by works. As a result, the gospel humbles men and women. The gospel simultaneously emboldens humans because the Lord of the universe loves and honors them, as well. They are righteous, blameless, and perfect in his sight. They are not

¹¹⁰ Keller, *Center Church*, 318-19.

¹¹¹ Keller, “The Community of Jesus.” Keller points out some reasons that it is difficult to create a Christian community as an alternative one in this world, which contemporary communication technologies heavily influence. See Keller, “The Difficulty of Community.”

¹¹² Keller, *Center Church*, 318.

¹¹³ Timothy J. Keller, “Community Building Practices,” *A Mind Awake*, accessed February 20, 2018, https://cbgiammona.files.wordpress.com/2008/02/mcm_2003-09.pdf.

¹¹⁴ Timothy J. Keller, “Life Together in Gospel Community,” *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed February 20, 2018, http://download.redeemer.com/grace_and_race/Embracing_the_Outsider.pdf.

¹¹⁵ Keller, *Center Church*, 318.

required to earn their worth through endorsement from people or by power over individuals.¹¹⁶ RPC clarifies this point: “Since the gospel both humbles us and assures us of our love-ness, we are now free from envy, pride, inferiority, and superiority.”¹¹⁷

Ways of Community Formation

RPC implements two main ways of fostering community formation: community groups and neighborhood gatherings.¹¹⁸

Community groups. Community groups are “gatherings of six to twelve people meeting in individuals’ homes and apartments throughout the city during the week.”¹¹⁹ Community groups have three purposes. First of all, the primary goal of community groups is experiencing Jesus Christ. The participant’s guide clarifies this objective “to experience Christ Jesus in our midst ministering to us and through us to one another so that our lives are changed.”¹²⁰ This chief purpose enables community groups to be employed for evangelism and discipleship. By experiencing Jesus in a community group, believers are edified by the gospel, which challenges unbelievers at the same time.¹²¹ Second, community groups pursue genuine Christian fellowship. RPC defines

¹¹⁶ Keller, *Center Church*, 319.

¹¹⁷ Redeemer Presbyterian Church Lincoln Square, “Introduction to Redeemer Lincoln Square: Membership Handbook 2017-2018” (unpublished paper, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, February 2018), 4. Keller explains how the gospel breaks down walls that are set against one another by studying the book of Ephesians. See Keller, “Life Together in Gospel Community.”

¹¹⁸ James Song, e-mail message to author, January 20, 2018.

¹¹⁹ Redeemer Presbyterian Church Lincoln Square, “Introduction,” 23.

¹²⁰ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Participant’s Guide” (unpublished paper for community group, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, January 28, 2018).

¹²¹ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Introduction to Community Groups at Redeemer,” *Redeemer City to City*, 1-2, accessed February 17, 2018, <https://learn.redeemercitycity.com/library/missional-ministry/68122/path/step/13655138/>. While one of the purposes of all community groups is evangelism, some special community groups focus a great deal on evangelism. These “Questioning Christianity” groups are intended to specifically include those who may not be professing Christians, but are wrestling with the idea of faith and want to know more. See details. Redeemer Presbyterian Church

Christian fellowship as “seeking to share with others what God has made known to you while letting them share with you what they know of him as a means of finding strength, refreshment, and instruction for one’s soul.”¹²² Finally, community groups are places in which gifts are discovered and exercised not only for the group itself, but additionally for RPC and the world. These three goals demonstrate that community groups are “the primary place for pastoral care” at RPC because they are locations of evangelism and discipleship, in which the gospel is best conveyed and made evident in them.¹²³

Neighborhood gatherings. Neighborhood gatherings are larger-format meetings (constituting approximately fifty through eighty individuals), which occur once every quarter. They are sometimes hosted at a restaurant or a pub, or gathered for community service, such as volunteer gardening. Neighborhood gatherings are comprised of multiple community groups and have a more casual and open format, to which non-Redeemer people or non-Christians—such as friends, family, and colleagues—are invited. The objective of these quarterly gatherings is providing a safer, or less daunting, way to become integrated into a community and to engage with one another to work for the good of the community and neighbors.¹²⁴

Discipleship Strategy

The RPC discipleship center is the community group, in which potential leaders are found, trained, developed, and deployed. One of the group leader’s most vital

East Side, “Community Groups,” *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed February 23, 2018, https://eastside.redeemer.com/connect/community_groups.

¹²² Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Introduction to Community Groups at Redeemer,” 1.

¹²³ Redeemer Presbyterian Church Lincoln Square, “Introduction”; Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Redeemer Vision and Values.”

¹²⁴ James Song, e-mail message to author; Redeemer Presbyterian Church East Side, “East Side Neighborhoods,” *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed February 23, 2018, <http://www.eastsideneighborhoods.com/about/>.

responsibilities is discipling disciplers or apprentices.¹²⁵ One of the main reasons RPC utilizes the apprentice-discipleship model is that “growth in gospel grace is best done in a community of informal relationships, not in a classroom or through a book. It is in a community that people see how a gospel-changed heart really works.”¹²⁶ Expressing it differently, RPC believes that delivering knowledge, as important as it is, is not sufficient for discipleship. Becoming a disciple or a leader means that one has godly character, ministry skills, and leadership based on the Scripture.¹²⁷ Many of these aspects concentrate on the cultivation of abilities, instead of knowledge transfer; and on showing how to live in everyday life, instead of telling how to live in a classroom. Hence, community groups are at the center of RPC discipleship.

Four stages of training leaders. RPC presents four stages of identifying and training leaders in a community group. Throughout these four stages, the basic discipleship methodology in a community group is to teach, demonstrate, observe, evaluate, and encourage.¹²⁸ The first one is the identity stage, in which a leader needs to look for people who are willing to know God more and have a strong desire to help others know the Lord more. If the leader finds this kind of individuals, the leader needs to spend more time mentoring potential leaders than other members. The leader can perform one-on-one training with the Bible-study materials or help the potential apprentices to participate in basic spiritual disciplines that RPC provides.¹²⁹ The second one is the

¹²⁵ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Introduction to Community Groups at Redeemer,” 10.

¹²⁶ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Redeemer Vision and Values.”

¹²⁷ Michael David Sills, *Reaching and Teaching: A Call to Great Commission Obedience* (Chicago: Moody, 2010), 170.

¹²⁸ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Fellowship Group Handbook,” *Gospel in Life*, 34, accessed January 17, 2018, <https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/fellowship-group-handbook-pdf-format/>.

¹²⁹ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Introduction to Community Groups at Redeemer,” 10.

mentor stage, in which the apprentices start to lead the worship, sharing, or prayer time. After the meeting, the leader discusses their experiences of leading a community group and trains them by means of the Community Leaders' Handbook and Leader-Coach Handbook. This stage is an informal stage, which means that the potential apprentices are not in the apprenticeship.¹³⁰

The third one is the intern stage, in which the apprenticeship is more formal than it is in previous stages. The apprentices lead the study part in the leader's presence. The leader keeps furnishing them with feedback and encouragement, and assists them in learning significant topics, such as basic Bible-reading skills, basic interpersonal skills, and a vision for a small-group community. The leader can teach them or connect them with discipleship classes or training seminars. The final stage is the apprentice stage. The leader informs other members that the apprenticeship is confirmed, and the apprentices may launch a new group in the future. The leader allows the apprentices to conduct the group without him or her. The leader continues to help them elucidate the gospel clearly from their own experience with radical grace and to have compassion for others' spiritual needs. They can participate in leaders' summits and meet community group coordinators and group pastoral staff members.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Introduction to Community Groups at Redeemer," 11. RPC provides a previous version of Community Leaders' Handbook called "Fellowship Group Handbook." This handbook is a leaders' manual, which assists them in recognizing a vision for community groups and structure; group dynamics; and pastoral care. See Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Fellowship Group Handbook." The "Leader-Coach Handbook" is a guide that helps a leader coach potential leaders through commonly arising situations. It includes a number of such questions and answers as, "How do I build community and lead my group well when it contains people from more than one congregation or church?" and "Does God decide who is saved and who isn't?" See Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Leader-Coach Handbook" (unpublished book, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, 2017).

¹³¹ A coordinator cares for and supports three to five group leaders, at most. Pastoral staff members nurture and train ten coordinators. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Introduction to Community Groups at Redeemer," 10-11. See details about multiplication of groups and leaders in Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Fellowship Group Handbook," 31-35.

Membership class. Because a community group is a main entrance to connect with RPC, a number of members in a community group do not have a membership. As a result, a leader encourages his or her members, who have faith in Christ, to have an RPC membership.¹³² The RPC East Side membership class has two sections: Christian formation and the church.¹³³ In the first section, Pastor Aaron Bjerke—who is a membership-class lecturer and a director of community groups—expounds the gospel in the context of the grand narrative of the Bible, articulating three vows among five vows of a member:

- 1) Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner 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?¹³⁴

In the second section, Carter Hinckley—who is a founding RPC elder—delineates that because God is a missionary God, his people would be a people on mission, too (Gen 12:1; Matt 28:19; Acts 1:8). The two primary ways of carrying the Lord’s mission forward are through worship and Christian community (Eph 2:19, 2:13). Then he elucidates RPC values and two vows among five vows: “4) Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability (time, tithe, and talent)? 5) Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to

¹³² I participated in the intensive membership class of RPC East Side on January 20, 2018, and found that many participants attended their community groups and Sunday worship for more than one year.

¹³³ The commentary below is primarily regarding RPC East Side. After Keller’s retirement, RPC has had three independent congregations, which are still connected as a network of sister churches, for some shared services. Three congregations have their own membership class materials.

¹³⁴ Aaron Bjerke and Carter Hinckley, “Intro to Redeemer East Side” (unpublished paper for membership class, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, January 20, 2018).

study its purity and peace?”¹³⁵ He highlights that applicants are required to take five vows to be an RPC member.¹³⁶

Conferences and classes. Public conferences and classes complement community-group-focused discipleship throughout the year. A leader, who knows members’ spiritual needs, encourages them to participate in classes and conferences. RPC offers a variety of classes that help members to grow in the gospel. For example, RPC’s East Wide congregation offered a class titled, “Gospel in Life.” This class focuses on ways the gospel changes every aspect of how Christians live and engage the world. Additionally, the East Side furnishes a class titled, “Gospel Principles for Parenting.” This lecture is designed to teach parents how to raise their children on the basis of fourteen foundational principles centered on the gospel.¹³⁷ RPC provides entire congregations with a Formation Conference, which contains two days of intensive public lectures. On November 17-18, 2017, Keller explored the difference between secular identities and a gospel identity, and taught how radical gospel grace shapes what Christians love and who they are.¹³⁸ Furthermore, RPC offers a formation conference: public faith. On April 13-14, 2018, Keller and David Kim—the Center for Faith & Work director— expounded how the gospel gives believers a new vision that their jobs work

¹³⁵ Bjerke and Hinckley, “Intro to Redeemer East Side.”

¹³⁶ RPC articulates the reason that formal membership is needed for Christians. See Garnes Ramona and John Lin, “Why Formal Membership in a Church?,” *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed February 26, 2018, https://www.redeemer.com/redeemer-report/article/why_formal_membership_in_a_church.

¹³⁷ Redeemer Presbyterian Church East Side, “East Side Classes,” *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed February 24, 2018, https://eastside.redeemer.com/learn/east_side_classes.

¹³⁸ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Formation Conference: Gospel Identity,” *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed February 24, 2018, https://www.redeemer.com/r/formation/formation_conference/gospel_identity_conference.

for God’s glory.¹³⁹ These weekly classes and intensive public conferences serve as means of community formation.

Serving. RPC encourages community group members to serve the church and its neighborhood: “When Jesus, who was ‘powerful in word and deed’ (Luke 24:19) calls us to love our neighbors, such love will necessarily involve both word and deed.”¹⁴⁰ During a community group meeting, one in charge of volunteer work informs members of opportunities to serve the city. He or she encourages them to participate in volunteer work, which Hope for New York, or Redeemer’s NYC mercy and justice outreach, offers.¹⁴¹ In addition, RPC provides various chances to serve the church body. Community group members can serve as greeters at the welcome center, service ushers, explainers at the information table, and staff at the book table. Moreover, they serve through children’s ministry, as part of community groups, and on the prayer team.¹⁴² All these services show that RPC regards serving as a vital avenue, through which its members are changed into the image of Jesus.

Mercy and Justice: Connecting People to the City

Keller argues that the gospel makes Christians humble to the poor. When they, who are spiritually poor, meet the materially poor, they identify themselves with the economically poor in the sense that both are hopeless without gracious intervention.¹⁴³ In

¹³⁹ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Formation Conference: Public Faith,” *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed February 24, 2018, https://www.redeemer.com/r/formation/formation_conference.

¹⁴⁰ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Fellowship Group Handbook,” 96.

¹⁴¹ Redeemer Presbyterian Church East Side, “Serve the Neighborhood,” *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed February 26, 2018, https://eastside.redeemer.com/serve/serve_the_neighborhood.

¹⁴² Redeemer Presbyterian Church East Side, “Serve the Church,” *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed February 26, 2018, https://eastside.redeemer.com/serve/serve_on_sundays.

¹⁴³ Timothy J. Keller, “The Both/And of the Gospel,” *Qideas*, accessed March 10, 2018,

other words, the gospel attacks the core of Christians' pride, which is self-sufficiency.¹⁴⁴ The gospel clarifies that they are not self-sufficient at all and that their lives completely rely on God's grace. As a result, just as Jesus treats believers with pure grace, the spiritually poor treat the materially poor with grace. RPC delineates that the gospel promotes mercy and justice ministry in a church:

The gospel humbles people with means and power, showing them that they are no better than anyone else before God. It also lifts up the poor and broken, giving them a new identity and confidence in Christ. While concern for the needy is in no way a means of salvation, *a life poured out in deeds of mercy and justice is a sign that the heart has been changed by grace*. We use both terms. Mercy is simply meeting people's basic needs out of a gospel-produced compassion. Doing justice includes being generous in sharing one's wealth and time in meeting immediate needs, but it consists also in being advocates for people with less social power, and more broadly, engaging as citizens in the city in order to make it a good place for all people to live. A gospel-preaching church should be famous for its mercy and justice (emphasis added).¹⁴⁵

RPC enacts mercy ministry and social justice through the Diaconate and Hope For New York.

The Church's Appropriate Role for the Poor

According to Keller, the fact that the church's ministry should demonstrate Christ's love through believers' lives does not mean that the church, as an institution, should participate in reforming the world.¹⁴⁶ In other words, while Keller affirms the dual mission of the church (word and deed ministries), he does not think that part of the church's mission is social transformation through the church.¹⁴⁷ The church's ministry therefore does not include social transformation in terms of its mission. His assertion

<http://qideas.org/videos/the-both-and-of-the-gospel-1>.

¹⁴⁴ Keller, "Our New Global Culture," 15.

¹⁴⁵ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Redeemer Vision and Values."

¹⁴⁶ Timothy J. Keller, "The Gospel and the Poor," *Themelios* 33, no. 3 (December 2008): 20.

¹⁴⁷ See chap. 4 concerning the mission of the church.

implies that the ministry of the church for the poor should have some boundaries by different ministry levels. Keller introduces three different ministry levels: relief, development, and reform.¹⁴⁸

The first level is relief, which is “direct aid to meet physical, material, or social needs.”¹⁴⁹ The common relief ministries of the church include furnishing temporary homeless shelters; food and clothing for those in need; medical services; and crisis counseling. If these ministries are not combined with other ministry levels, the efforts of the church to assist the poor result in fostering dependency.¹⁵⁰ In other words, providing direct aid can be harmful to the poor.¹⁵¹ The second ministry level is development, in which a person and a community are brought into self-sufficiency. Keller identifies a biblical ground of development in Deuteronomy 15:12-14. In this passage, when a master of slaves releases them, the master is required not to send them away empty-handed. He should offer them resources for a self-sufficient life. Development for individuals implies providing education, job creation, and training. Community development includes “reinvesting social and financial capital into a social system—housing development and home ownership, other capital investments, and so on.”¹⁵² Reform is the third level. The emphasis of reform is changing social conditions and structures that aggravate poverty and cause dependency.

¹⁴⁸ Keller, *Center Church*, 325-26.

¹⁴⁹ Timothy J. Keller, *Gospel in Life: Grace Changes Everything* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 114.

¹⁵⁰ Keller, “The Gospel and the Poor,” 20.

¹⁵¹ Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert contend that relief-focused ministry is harmful to the poor, noting, “One of the biggest mistakes that North American churches make is in applying relief in situations in which rehabilitation or development is the appropriate intervention.” Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor and Yourself* (Chicago: Moody, 2012), 101.

¹⁵² Keller, “The Gospel and the Poor,” 21.

Keller contends that the mercy and justice ministry of the church should not include all ministry levels. Rather, church ministry should concentrate on individual relief and development because the church cannot conduct its main evangelism-and-discipleship work when it attempts to perform all levels of work.¹⁵³ On this issue, he comments, “Churches that . . . try to take on all the levels of doing justice often find that the work of community renewal and social justice overwhelms the work of preaching, teaching, and nurturing the congregation.”¹⁵⁴

Keller elaborates on the reason that the church must focus on relief and part of the second ministry level. First of all, community development and social reform are so expensive that they are highly likely to take away financial resources from evangelism and discipleship. In addition, those ministries are too complicated and prevent concentrating on the ministry of God’s Word and prayer (Acts 6:1-7). Finally, those ministry goals are too political, and make the church establish an alliance with particular political parties in ways that compromise church independence.¹⁵⁵ To help pastors and elders emphasize their main job, RPC founded the Diaconate for the poor at RPC, as well as Hope For New York¹⁵⁶ for the poor in NYC.

The Diaconate

RPC established the Diaconate in 1991, as its arm for members and regular attendees.¹⁵⁷ Pastors and staff members assumed the responsibility for handling the mercy

¹⁵³ Keller, “The Gospel and the Poor,” 21.

¹⁵⁴ Timothy J. Keller, *Generous Justice: How God’s Grace Makes Us Just* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 146.

¹⁵⁵ Keller, *Center Church*, 326.

¹⁵⁶ HFNY will refer to Hope For New York.

¹⁵⁷ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “2016 Annual Report: Redeemer Churches and Ministries,” *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, 18, accessed April 20, 2018, <http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/AR2016.pdf>.

ministry at RPC during the first three years after the planting of RPC, from 1989 to 1991. Keller had written his dissertation about mercy ministries through deacons and deaconesses. He wanted to found the Diaconate to enable deacons and deaconesses to handle mercy ministry.¹⁵⁸ He thought that elders must be responsible for teaching the gospel and overseeing the church. The Diaconate, though, should focus on taking the responsibility of mercy ministry for Redeemer members and regular attendees facing difficult situations.¹⁵⁹ The definition and purpose of Diaconate reflect Keller's understanding of mercy ministry:

The Diaconate—a group of men (deacons) and women (deaconesses) who are nominated, trained, elected and appointed by Redeemer elders and members—exists to contribute to the building of a repentant and rejoicing community through loving, truth-telling relationships where practical, visible needs are being met while hearts are being changed through encounters with Jesus and one another. We express in practical ways Christ's command to all believers to love our neighbor as ourselves.¹⁶⁰

The Diaconate strives to provide wholistic care with those in great need through seven ways.

Financial assistance for basic living expenses. Those who are in need of practical aid may reach the Diaconate through its help-line number. A deacon or a deaconess contacts the needy people to determine whether the Diaconate can assist them as clients based on a list of criteria.¹⁶¹ After a needy person has been accepted as a Diaconate client, the partnership between the Diaconate and the client is a two-way

¹⁵⁸ Jenny Chang, "The Redeemer Diaconate: 1991-2014," *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed April 20, 2018, https://www.redeemer.com/learn/about_us/25th_anniversary.

¹⁵⁹ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Diaconate Brochure," *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed April 20, 2018, http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/Diaconate_Brochure.pdf.

¹⁶⁰ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Diaconate," *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed February 27, 2018, <https://www.redeemer.com/r/diaconate>.

¹⁶¹ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Getting Diaconate Care," *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed April 20, 2018, https://www.redeemer.com/r/diaconate/getting_diaconate_care.

street. On the one hand, the Diaconate expects the client to make full disclosure of his or her financial situation to assess the best way for help. However, it is shameful for the client to reveal his or her financial failure. Consequently, the Diaconate approaches the client with genuine respect.¹⁶² The following anonymous testimony illustrates how the Diaconate respectfully treats the financially needy:

On my way to meet with the deaconesses for the first time, I felt ashamed I'd gotten myself into such a mess. I'd heaped so much judgment on myself, I didn't think I'd be able to take any more from someone else. Admittedly, our first meeting was extremely uncomfortable for me; it's not easy to talk about the things you are most ashamed of with strangers. However, I was encouraged because I did not feel an ounce of judgment from them. They listened, empathized and helped me to receive practical assistance.¹⁶³

On the other hand, the client expects the Diaconate not merely to endeavor to understand him or her, but to provide financial assistance to the client, too. Before its support starts, the Diaconate asks the client to reduce unnecessary spending. It may provide long-term financial help for the client; however, its intention is reducing and finally stopping financial aid to prevent the client from depending on financial assistance.¹⁶⁴ According to Jenney Chang, the Diaconate director, the Diaconate furnished direct financial support to more than 1,500 RPC congregants for over twenty-three years (from 1991 to 2014). The value of financial assistance is more than \$4.3 million.¹⁶⁵ The Diaconate spent \$264,000 to support over five hundred RPC individuals in 2015.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Getting Diaconate Care."

¹⁶³ A Client of Diaconate, "Diaconate Testimonies," *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed April 20, 2018, <https://www.redeemer.com/r/diaconate/testimonies>.

¹⁶⁴ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Getting Diaconate Care."

¹⁶⁵ Chang, "The Redeemer Diaconate: 1991-2014."

¹⁶⁶ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "2015 Annual Report: Redeemer Churches and Ministries," *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, 20, accessed April 21, 2018, <http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/AR2015.pdf>.

Prayer, spiritual guidance, and accountability. The Diaconate offers its clients not just financial assistance, but additionally spiritual support.¹⁶⁷ Deacons and deaconesses, who are spiritually and practically trained to serve those who are in need, assume this work.¹⁶⁸ The following is an instance of wholistic care for the needy:

A good friend encouraged me to call the Diaconate. Without delay, they met my immediate physical needs: paying doctors' bills and even buying me a bed. They encouraged me to get counseling. They called at random times to check on me, pray with me and encourage me. Three years later I still meet with my deaconesses who are now an important part of my life I appreciate the weekly prayer times I've had with the deaconess who's working with me. If we don't have time to get together, we pray on the phone, sometime two or three times a week when I need it.¹⁶⁹

Until 2014, 244 men and women attended theological and doctrinal classes, along with a practical-skill training class, to serve on the Diaconate.¹⁷⁰ These individuals are ones who ascertained client requirements and provided spiritual supervision and accountability to identify wise solutions.¹⁷¹

Subsidies for Redeemer counseling services. When deacons and deaconesses feel that clients need professional help, the Diaconate connects them with Redeemer Counseling Services and pays the bills for it.¹⁷² Unlike secular counseling, counselors at Redeemer Counseling Services strive to furnish professional care, pointing to the power

¹⁶⁷ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Diaconate."

¹⁶⁸ An RPC member is required to complete several steps to become a deacon or a deaconess, including nomination, qualification, and training. See Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Nominations - Redeemer Churches and Ministries," *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed April 21, 2018, <https://www.redeemer.com/r/nominations>.

¹⁶⁹ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Testimonies," *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed February 27, 2018, <https://www.redeemer.com/r/diaconate/testimonies>.

¹⁷⁰ Chang, "The Redeemer Diaconate: 1991-2014."

¹⁷¹ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Diaconate Brochure."

¹⁷² Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Diaconate."

of Christ, who is the ultimate restorer and healer.¹⁷³ The Diaconate posts an example of this case.

The 10th anniversary of 9/11 was approaching. I was months behind on my rent . . . I was financially and spiritually challenged. As honored as I am to have served in the recovery efforts, nine months of work at Ground Zero led to acute post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). I was conscious that the impending anniversary could be an emotional trigger and I knew that I needed help. From my first phone call to the Diaconate I was treated with respect. I felt listened to and understood. The Diaconate assisted me with rent and groceries. Most importantly, I was able to go into counseling for the PTSD that was overwhelming me again. The Diaconate was able to provide access to counseling with a specific understanding of Christianity that would have otherwise been unavailable to me. The strength that I had to work at the Respite Center at Ground Zero had failed me, which is something I am sure God wanted me to learn.¹⁷⁴

This instance demonstrates that the Diaconate is eager to provide economical and spiritual care, as well as emotional care. The Diaconate spent approximately \$40,000 to subsidize counseling in 2015.¹⁷⁵

Job search coaching. The Diaconate supports the job search ministry.¹⁷⁶ The purpose of this ministry is aiding members to accomplish success in their job search. To achieve such a goal, the Diaconate hosts two programs for the job-searching ministry: the job-searching roundtable and job-searching skills training. The former is a two-hour, weekly meeting for people seeking employment. During this meeting, the unemployed create a gospel-centered community in which they experience a safe environment for mutual support. They are compassionate with one another because they are all in the same situation. One of the important themes of this meeting is that their identity is not rooted in their job, but in Christ alone. The job search skills training is a five-session course to help

¹⁷³ Redeemer Counseling, “Redeemer Counseling,” *Redeemer Counseling Services*, accessed April 21, 2018, <https://counseling.redeemer.com/>.

¹⁷⁴ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Testimonies.”

¹⁷⁵ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Diaconate Brochure.”

¹⁷⁶ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Diaconate.”

professionals be equipped with successful job-searching skills like “job fit assessment, career search strategy, resume writing, LinkedIn, engaging recruiters, mock interviewing, and mock salary negotiations.”¹⁷⁷ In 2016, 213 job seekers received assistance from the job-searching ministry, and many of them moved from being depressed to employment.¹⁷⁸

Other ways. The Diaconate seeks to help those in such difficult life experiences as divorce and aging. Separated or newly divorced women can participate in ten- to twelve-week meetings, in which they can experience supportive prayer and spiritual encouragement. Additionally, they are encouraged to start afresh through Bible study, prayer, and a divorce-recovery program. In addition, the Diaconate operates a care group for adults who are sixty and older called OWLS (Older Wiser Loving Servants). Group participants can build a genuine community by diving into frank discussions, sharing personal stories, and serving their community together.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, the Diaconate provides meals with congregants in special circumstances like illness and childbirth. It delivered two hundred meals to individuals in need in 2016.¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, it offers biblical stewardship and a budgeting seminar to assist congregants to move out of debt and into financial freedom. Finally, it enables them to connect with city services.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Job Search Ministry – Redeemer Churches and Ministries,” *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed April 21, 2018, https://www.redeemer.com/r/career_center/job_search_ministry.

¹⁷⁸ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “2016 Annual Report,” 19.

¹⁷⁹ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Care Groups: Redeemer Churches and Ministries,” *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed April 23, 2018, https://www.redeemer.com/r/diaconate/care_groups_and_seminars.

¹⁸⁰ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “2016 Annual Report,” 15.

¹⁸¹ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Diaconate.”

Hope for New York

HFNY was founded in 1992 as a nonprofit organization, and RPC's partner for mercy-and-justice outreach as a separate "501(c)(3) organization."¹⁸² It partners with ten church congregations, making HFNY ministry possible through donation and volunteering.¹⁸³ It also joins with more than forty-five nonprofit organizations, called "affiliates," to serve the poor.¹⁸⁴

HFNY's vision highlights wholistic care for New Yorkers, stating that "our vision is a New York City in which all people experience spiritual, social, and economic flourishing through the demonstration of Christ's love."¹⁸⁵ Its mission clarifies ways the vision can be fulfilled through the HFNY ministry: "our mission is to mobilize volunteers and financial resources to support nonprofit affiliates serving the poor and marginalized in NYC. We aim to strengthen our affiliates so they can do their work even better."¹⁸⁶ This mission includes two vital points. Initially, HFNY achieves its vision by partnering with existing organizations that serve the poor in NYC. Phrasing it differently, RPC does not directly work for the poor in NYC, especially not for community development and social reform. Instead, RPC assists the marginalized through HFNY, which supports existing nonprofit organizations serving the poor. HFNY calls these organizations affiliates.

¹⁸² A 501(c)(3) organization indicates a nonprofit organization allowing for federal-tax exemption. See Foundation Group, "What Is a 501(c)(3)?" *Foundation Group*, accessed April 26, 2018, <https://www.501c3.org/what-is-a-501c3/>.

¹⁸³ Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, "The Life and Times of Redeemer Presbyterian Church," *The Gospel Coalition*, accessed August 25, 2017, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/life-and-times-of-redeemer-presbyterian-church>.

¹⁸⁴ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "2016 Annual Report," 20.

¹⁸⁵ Hope for New York, "FY 2017 Annual Report" (unpublished paper for Hope For New York, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, 2017).

¹⁸⁶ Hope For New York, "About Hope For New York," *Hope For New York*, accessed August 24, 2017, <http://hfnny.org/about/>.

Second, the mission indicates three practical strategies for supporting nonprofit affiliates: volunteers, funding, and capacity building.¹⁸⁷

Volunteers. HFNY underlines volunteers' significance and makes an effort to mobilize them to serve nonprofit organizations, noting, "Volunteers are the heartbeat of our work. Whether they are scrambling eggs, renovating buildings, workshopping resumes, or teaching English class, our volunteers extend and expand the work of our affiliates."¹⁸⁸ HFNY concentrates on three points in terms of volunteers' work. First, it asks volunteers to make a long-term commitment. It believes that sanctification does not happen in a vacuum, but in a relationship context. Because most volunteers are Christians, it encourages and empowers them to continue their volunteer work not only for Christians' social responsibility, but for their spiritual growth, as well. In 2017, 3,756 volunteers served the city for 47,130 hours. Second, HFNY offers volunteer training to prepare them to be effective volunteer leaders. After completing essential training, they can work in such varied leadership roles as HFNY Reps and His Toy Store. In 2017, 286 volunteers assumed responsibility in leadership roles. Finally, HFNY has a number of volunteer programs at both new and existing affiliates. Nineteen new volunteer programs were launched in 2017.¹⁸⁹

Funding. HFNY invests funds in more than forty-five nonprofit organizations to enable these affiliates to serve additional neighbors in need. Its funding directly supports a number of affiliates providing emergency food pantries, job-training programs, children's after-school programs, recovery programs, community development, and

¹⁸⁷ Hope For New York, "FY 2017 Annual Report."

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

numerous other services.¹⁹⁰ HFNY supported the affiliates with over \$2 million in 2017. This sum includes \$704,875 for adult recovery; \$479,950 for community development; \$426,060 for children and youth; \$390,830 for targeted populations, such as immigrants; and \$69,050 for seasonal events like Thanksgiving and Christmas.¹⁹¹ To ensure the most strategic investment possible, HFNY evaluates each organization during the grant comprehensive due-diligence process, based on these questions: Is leadership capable, effective, and mission-driven? Are programs impactful, wholistic, and gospel-centered? Are vision and strategy clear, measurable, and compelling, given the need that exists in New York City? Is financial management healthy and characterized by wise stewardship?¹⁹²

Capacity building. HFNY would like to make sure that its affiliates serve the poor in NYC even better. In other words, it wants to strengthen its investment in the organizations. As a result, the affiliates can maximize their influence on, and effectiveness to, the poor. It attempts to promote capacity building by furnishing training and consulting through a number of educational programs to reach this goal.¹⁹³ In 2017, HFNY highlighted two kinds of programs: investing in early-stage nonprofits in its accelerator program and equipping the nonprofit community. The former focuses on helping new and growing affiliates to develop their organizational effectiveness. It covers a variety of topics related to board and fund development, and strategic planning. The latter emphasizes strengthening current and potential organizations. HFNY hosted four workshops in 2017, which covered significant topics like “Coaching and Motivating Employees, Effective

¹⁹⁰ Hope For New York, “Strengthening Our Affiliates,” *Hope For New York*, accessed April 26, 2018, <http://hfny.org/pages/how/>.

¹⁹¹ Hope For New York, “About Hope For New York.”

¹⁹² Hope For New York, “FY 2017 Annual Report.”

¹⁹³ Hope For New York, “Strengthening Our Affiliates.”

Practices in Volunteer Management, Crafting a Communications Strategy, and a Gospel Lens to Prevent Burnout.” In 2017, 110 affiliate staff members participated in capacity-building training. Hence, 52 percent of the affiliates who participated in the training increased in budget size. Moreover, 32 percent of the affiliates who participated in the training increased in program size. Additionally, 44 percent of the affiliates who participated in the training grew in the number of clients served.¹⁹⁴

Operation Exodus. Operation Exodus, which is one of HFNY’s original affiliates, is a crystal-clear example of ways that HFNY serves the poor in NYC through affiliates. Operation Exodus serves Latino children (kindergartners through twelfth-graders) in Washington, Heights, Inwood, and the Bronx. Its mission is launching “NYC Latino youth to college and lives of excellence by loving and challenging them through educational opportunities and transformational relationships.”¹⁹⁵ First of all, HFNY mobilizes volunteers for Bible studies, worship, academic tutoring, mentoring, and various activities to achieve this objective. These volunteers sacrificially spend their time and implement their talents to serve children. Many of them are mentors, board members, and donors to the organization.¹⁹⁶ In addition, HFNY provides its funding with Operation Exodus. This funding helps to cover the costs of money for its programs, such as mentoring and tutoring programs. Finally, HFNY offers ongoing training and consulting with Operation Exodus. Since 1994, it thus has strengthened and expanded its programs to various sites and currently furnishes not just after-school programs, but college-bound resources and parent-empowerment programs, too.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ Hope For New York, “FY 2017 Annual Report.”

¹⁹⁵ Hope For New York, “Hope for New York: Operation Exodus,” *Hope For New York*, accessed April 27, 2018, <http://hfny.org/affiliates/operation-exodus>.

¹⁹⁶ Elise Chong, “Equipping Our Church to Do Justice and Love Mercy,” *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed April 23, 2018, https://www.redeemer.com/learn/about_us/25th_anniversary.

¹⁹⁷ Hope For New York, “Hope for New York: Operation Exodus.”

Cultural Renewal: Connecting People to the Culture

Keller holds that the gospel influences not merely personal life, but also public life. Many believers feel they should not connect faith with their vocation and consider Christian faith a means of finding inner peace. Keller, though, who does not concur, asserts, “The gospel is seen as a means of . . . a transformative worldview—a comprehensive interpretation of reality that affects all we do.”¹⁹⁸ His assertion implies that the clear understanding of the gospel has a significant impact on how Christians think and work for their vocational life. In this sense, RPC clarifies that the gospel causes Christians to be engaged with “cultural renewal”¹⁹⁹ through the integration of faith and work:

The gospel does not only have implications for our private life and Christian relationships. It also affects our public life, particularly how we pursue our vocations in the world and do our daily work When Christians begin to do their work out of a different set of beliefs—whether in business, the arts, the academy, government, or the helping professions—it changes and renews the culture. The gospel gives every believer a new worldview, new inner motives and power, and new conceptions and guidelines for work. While the local church does not directly seek to change culture, it discipled its people to be agents out in the world who do.²⁰⁰

Keller believes that one of the essential parts of church ministries is helping Christians think through the gospel implications for their jobs.²⁰¹ RPC enacts this job through the Center for Faith & Work.²⁰²

The Center for Faith and Work

CFW is RPC’s cultural-engagement arm, which “exists to explore and investigate the gospel’s unique power to renew hearts, communities, and the world, in

¹⁹⁸ Keller, “Five Ministry Fronts in the City,” 2.

¹⁹⁹ When Keller was asked the question, “Should Christians be involved in shaping or transforming culture?” he responded with the inevitability of cultural engagement as long as Christians live in a culture. However, he prefers to implement the term “cultural renewal,” instead of “cultural transformation” or “culture shaping.” Keller, *Center Church*, 335.

²⁰⁰ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Redeemer Vision and Values.”

²⁰¹ Keller, *Center Church*, 334.

²⁰² The Center for Faith & Work will be referred to as CFW.

and through our day-to-day work.”²⁰³ In other words, it helps RPC members to apply the powerful uniqueness of the gospel to their vocation. Based on the conviction that the gospel can and should impact vocational life, all CFW programs, classes, and events are designed to connect, equip, and mobilize Christians to engage with the world adequately.²⁰⁴

Connecting (community formation). Recognizing that community formation within similar vocational clusters is an essential part of cultural engagement, CFW helps believers connect with one another.²⁰⁵ This realization is because it is difficult for Christians to maintain their keen sense of the applicability of the gospel for their works. They can discover and sharpen their work purpose in the light of the gospel by connecting with others working in a similar industry.²⁰⁶ RPC features two kinds of meetings: vocation groups and large monthly events.

RPC has numerous lay-led vocational groups: Actors, Advertisers, Architecture, Business, Dancers, Doctoral Students, Educators, Engineering and Construction, Entrepreneurs, Fashion, Film, Finance, Healthcare, Higher Education, Information Technology, International Diplomacy, Law, Visual Arts, and Writers. These Christian groups regularly meet with special speakers or in social events.²⁰⁷ A critical group focus is thinking about their professions in the light of a gospel worldview, and comprehending how the uniqueness of the gospel requires them to work. In addition, RPC has a number of large monthly events. For instance, in 2015, CFW hosted *Our Calling Series*, which

²⁰³ Center for Faith & Work, “What/Why,” *Center for Faith & Work*, accessed April 27, 2018, <http://faithandwork.com/about/1-what-why>.

²⁰⁴ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Redeemer Guide,” *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed July 8, 2017, http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/welcome_book.pdf.

²⁰⁵ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “2016 Annual Report.”

²⁰⁶ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Redeemer Guide.”

²⁰⁷ Timothy J. Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God’s Work* (New York: Penguin, 2014), 250.

consisted of three events investigating what it means to work in the light of calling. More than 550 Christians took part in this event.²⁰⁸ CFW held the *Faith & Work Prayer Series* in 2016. In this series, believers participated in three evenings of teaching, worship, and prayer for gospel-driven engagement in their workplace.²⁰⁹

Equipping (theological and discipleship training). CFW greatly stresses theological and discipleship training to prepare Christians for cultural engagement, contending, “A critical part of CFW’s vision is to equip people theologically and spiritually for public life.”²¹⁰ It tries to attain this vision through the Gotham Fellowship; intensive ministry training; faith and work courses; and an annual conference.²¹¹

Gotham Fellowship is an intensive, nine-month discipleship program for young professionals with at least two years of working experience. Keller argues for the significance of the Gotham Fellowship in discipleship terms: “Gotham is the most effective form of discipleship that Redeemer Presbyterian Church has had to date, and embodies everything Redeemer has been about from the beginning.”²¹² Gotham participants are required to fulfill three requirements. Initially, they need to conduct daily devotions with the group through guided scriptural and devotional readings. Second, they should participate in two hours of class per week to discuss weekly readings. Moreover, it is necessary for them to participate in monthly Saturday gatherings for in-depth training, along with three retreats for personal reflection and spiritual formation.²¹³

²⁰⁸ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “2015 Annual Report.”

²⁰⁹ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “2016 Annual Report.”

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Redeemer Guide”; Center for Faith & Work, “Center for Faith & Work,” *Center for Faith & Work*, accessed April 27, 2018, <http://faithandwork.com/>.

²¹² Center for Faith & Work, “Year-End Report 2016-2017” (unpublished brochure, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, 2017), 1.

²¹³ Center for Faith & Work, “Gotham Fellowship,” *Center for Faith & Work*, accessed April

One of the most significant Gotham goals is providing a theological framework within which participants develop their understanding of what it means to be a Christian chemical engineer, journalist, banker, etc.²¹⁴ They learn a number of vital theological topics to achieve this objective. For example, participants learn the gospel as public truth according to a Gotham Fellowship course outline. The key point of this class articulates how the gospel of Christ affects not only their understanding of the Christian faith, but their public life, as well. Furthermore, they analyze and evaluate various worldviews, and the biblical perspective is presented as an alternative, aiding Christians to experience a proper relationship with God, man, and the world.²¹⁵ Additionally, students study numerous resources that Augustine, Calvin, Owen, and Luther wrote. They develop their ability to apply the gospel not just to their hearts and relationships, but also to their understanding of vocation.²¹⁶

In addition, CFW hosts intensive discipleship programs for church leadership. They consist of five-day workshops for pastors and lay leaders who want to develop the integration of faith and work into their ministry contexts. The main emphasis of this intensive is teaching faith-and-work theology, as well as practical ministry. Teaching resources are derived from more than fourteen years of CFW ministry and ten years of

27, 2018, <http://faithandwork.com/programs/1-gotham-fellowship>.

²¹⁴ David Kim, "A Pastor's Perspective on the Gotham Fellowship," *Redeemer Presbyterian Church*, accessed May 1, 2018, https://www.redeemer.com/redeemer-report/article/a_pastors_perspective_on_the_gotham_fellowship.

²¹⁵ City to City Australia, "The Gotham Fellowship: Course Outline," *City to City Australia*, accessed May 1, 2018, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53b1f405e4b02828a861911e/t/551b37b0e4b0f86de554de99/1427847088006/The+Gotham+Fellowship+-+Detailed+Course+Outline+2016.pdf>.

²¹⁶ Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 251. Besides theological training, Gotham makes an effort to foster spiritual development and community formation, too. See Center for Faith & Work, "Gotham Fellowship."

Gotham Fellowship ministry.²¹⁷ CFW also offers two courses for RPC members: introduction (six weeks) and intermediate (twelve-week intensive). The introductory level concentrates on elucidating God’s will for vocations based on six different Bible passages.²¹⁸ During the intermediate course, participants learn how the gospel challenges prevalent workplace idols and develop creative ways to address brokenness in the vocational life.²¹⁹ It follows similar contours to the Gotham Fellowship curriculum, and emphasizes articulating the theological basis and practical skills for applying faith to the workplace.²²⁰

Moreover, CFW has hosted annual conferences for the entire congregation at RPC since 2011. Essential topics were addressed, such as the 2011 Gospel and Culture Conference, 2012 Wrestling God: Work Reimagined, 2013 Humanizing Work, 2014 Making All Things New, and 2015 Beyond Collaboration: Discovering the Communal Nature of Calling.²²¹ More than five hundred Christians participated in the 2016 annual conference, the Wonder and Fear of Technology, during which the gathering examined the intersection of faith and technology.²²² In 2017, Formed to Work for the Glory of God,

²¹⁷ Center for Faith & Work, “Ministry Training,” *Center for Faith & Work*, accessed April 27, 2018, <http://faithandwork.com/programs/11-ministry-training>.

²¹⁸ Center for Faith & Work, “Faith & Work Class,” *Center for Faith & Work*, accessed May 2, 2018, <http://faithandwork.com/programs/2-faith-work-courses/38-faith-work-class>. Those who want to learn this introduction can learn it through the internet, as well. David Kim, “Faith and Work 6 Week,” *Center for Faith & Work*, accessed May 2, 2018, <https://equip.faithandwork.com/library/faith-and-work-6-week/about/>.

²¹⁹ Center for Faith & Work, “Faith & Work Courses,” *Center for Faith & Work*, accessed April 27, 2018, <http://faithandwork.com/programs/2-faith-work-courses>.

²²⁰ Center for Faith & Work, “Year-End Report 2016-2017,” 5.

²²¹ Center for Faith & Work, “Past Conferences,” *Center for Faith & Work*, accessed May 3, 2018, <http://faithandwork.com/events/past-conferences>.

²²² Center for Faith & Work, “Year-End Report 2016-2017,” 10.

CFW clarified that human beings were created to glorify the Lord through their work.²²³ According to the 2016 RPC annual report, CFW helped over 4,400 people to integrate their faith and work through courses, workshops, programs, and an annual conference.²²⁴

Mobilizing (through imagination and innovation). CFW endeavors to mobilize people throughout NYC to creatively and innovatively apply the gospel of Christ. To mobilize people effectively, CFW implements two important programs: Arts Ministry, and Entrepreneurship and Innovation.²²⁵

Arts Ministry keeps reinforcing, triggering, and encouraging the artists' creative work throughout NYC.²²⁶ Because approximately 18 percent of RPC's congregation work is related to the different fields of art—like music, theater, visual arts, dance, writing, and design—CFW strives to assist artists to embody the gospel in their vocational life.²²⁷ It offers an artist-in-residence program. This program aims to support new and established artists, and celebrate the intrinsic and creative value of the arts. CFW aids chosen resident artists to understand not only the theological implications of their work, but significant responsibility as a culture shaper in NYC, too.²²⁸ In past years, selected artists have been visual artists, composers, filmmakers, authors, photographers, writers, dancers, poets, illustrators, and storytellers.²²⁹ In addition, CFW offers Faith & Art Lectures, from which

²²³ Center for Faith & Work, "Conference," *Center for Faith & Work*, accessed May 3, 2018, <http://faithandwork.com/events/123-faith-work-conference>.

²²⁴ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "2016 Annual Report."

²²⁵ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Redeemer Guide."

²²⁶ Center for Faith & Work, "Artist-in-Residence," *Center for Faith & Work*, accessed April 27, 2018, <http://faithandwork.com/programs/6-artist-in-residence>.

²²⁷ Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 252.

²²⁸ Center for Faith & Work, "Year-End Report 2016-2017," 23.

²²⁹ Center for Faith & Work, "Past Artists-In-Residence," *Center for Faith & Work*, accessed May 3, 2018, <http://faithandwork.com/programs/6-artist-in-residence/16-past-artists-in-residence>.

Christian artists learn the reason arts are crucial parts of God’s work in renewing his creation and how the gospel redemptively affects the way they create.²³⁰

Entrepreneurship and Innovation helps entrepreneurs within congregants at RPC to have a vision for ventures that cause gospel-centered renewal in NYC and the world.²³¹ To furnish entrepreneurs with theological and practical grounds, CFW provides the Faith & Entrepreneurship Course and Entrepreneurship Intensive. The former, six-week course is ideal for individuals who are in the beginning stage of a business or a non-profit organization.²³² The latter is a three-month intensive, which is designed to help entrepreneurs operate their businesses for profit, as well as for the common good driven by the gospel. This intensive is a condensed version of Gotham curriculum framework.²³³ Furthermore, CFW holds Startup Pitch Night to promote gospel-centered businesses for the common good.²³⁴ Such a business-plan competition assists entrepreneurs in thinking biblically and strategically about their ventures. Every participant should present his or her plans in five minutes to audience and judges. Winners receive a grant, and CFW connects them with senior leaders in the business field for coaching.²³⁵

²³⁰ Center for Faith & Work, “Faith & Art Lectures,” *Center for Faith & Work*, accessed May 3, 2018, <http://faithandwork.com/events/94-faith-art-lectures>; David Kim, “Online Faith & Art,” *Center for Faith & Work*, accessed May 3, 2018, <https://equip.faithandwork.com/library/online-faith-art-course/about/>.

²³¹ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Redeemer Guide”; Center for Faith & Work, “Entrepreneurship & Innovation,” *Center for Faith & Work*, accessed May 3, 2018, <http://faithandwork.com/programs/7-entrepreneurship-innovation>.

²³² Center for Faith & Work, “Faith & Entrepreneurship Course,” *Center for Faith & Work*, accessed May 3, 2018, <http://faithandwork.com/programs/7-entrepreneurship-innovation/20-faith-entrepreneurship-course>.

²³³ Center for Faith & Work, “Entrepreneurship Intensive,” *Center for Faith & Work*, accessed May 3, 2018, <http://faithandwork.com/programs/7-entrepreneurship-innovation/22-entrepreneurship-intensive>.

²³⁴ Center for Faith & Work, “Startup Pitch Night,” *Center for Faith & Work*, accessed May 3, 2018, <http://faithandwork.com/programs/7-entrepreneurship-innovation/31-startup-pitch-night>.

²³⁵ Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 251.

A Gospel Movement: Planting Gospel-Centered Churches

Keller holds that RPC attempts to be one of the catalysts for a gospel movement by planting gospel-centered churches that share RPC core values.²³⁶

A Gospel Movement

RPC thus articulates what a gospel movement is:

A movement is a dynamic set of interactive relationships between renewed churches, new churches, a variety of specialist ministries (that unite congregations and lay people to do prayer, evangelism, youth and college ministries, faith and work projects, and mercy and justice) as well as many other new institutions, non-profits, arts initiatives, organizations, and companies. In a true movement, common vision and a spirit of innovation and cooperation characterize the relationships of these entities. Then the relationships stimulate all parties and overall the Body of Christ in a city grows faster than the population—without a central, top-down, control center. Lots of new ministries and churches are begun, and churches overall see conversions and changed lives. A movement also requires a host of institutions, such as schools and theological training centers, which support family life in the city and raise up leaders. A movement requires above all a “kingdom” (rather than a tribal) mindset on the part of the Christians of the city, produced (as usual!) by a grasp of the gospel of grace and the Biblical theology on which it is based.²³⁷

This explanation implies that a gospel movement is a dynamic phenomenon in which there is the proliferation of conversions, transformed lives, revived churches, new churches, special ministries, and healthy influence on the city.

Keller, while writing in the *Redeemer City to City* blog, additionally gives the detailed articulation of a gospel movement with two aspects: both individual and corporate. Individually, a gospel movement breaks out when people realize the essential gospel meaning correctly and freshly. He comments that “a gospel movement is when the gospel itself is rediscovered, lifted up, understood and becomes a dynamic power in lives.”²³⁸ In other words, the individual aspect of a gospel movement occurs when people

²³⁶ Keller, “Five Ministry Fronts in the City”; Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Redeemer Vision and Values.”

²³⁷ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, “Redeemer Vision and Values.”

²³⁸ Timothy J. Keller, “Defining a Gospel Movement,” *Redeemer City to City*, accessed August 28, 2017, <http://www.redeemercitytocity.com/blog/defining-a-gospel-movement>.

comprehend how radically different the gospel is from both legalism and antinomianism.²³⁹ According to Keller, when radical gospel grace is proclaimed to individuals, three things happen: nominal Christians become converted; backsliding Christians wake up; and non-Christians start coming to a church and are converted.²⁴⁰

He claims that the relationship between the individual and corporate aspects of a gospel movement is symbiotic because the more individual gospel renewal breaks out, the more churches perform the balanced ministry effectively.²⁴¹ A church experiencing the corporate aspect of a gospel movement, according to Keller, possesses a healthy balance among five characteristics: “Solid teaching and preaching of the Word; anointed worship and extraordinary prayer; loving fellowship and thick community; outward-facing and bold evangelism; and compassionate, vigorous social justice.”²⁴² Because two aspects are in the symbiotic relationship, a church—which is conducting the balanced gospel ministry in the corporate aspect of a gospel movement—attracts additional people to the church, and they understand the radical gospel grace in the individual aspect of a gospel movement. For this reason, they are eager to contribute to participating balanced ministries, as well.²⁴³

Keller maintains that a gospel movement is produced by God, not by believers: “[Christians] can’t really make [a gospel movement] start Gospel movements are too supernatural.”²⁴⁴ He articulates this idea by implementing the gardening metaphor (1 Cor

²³⁹ See the chap. 4 for details about differences among gospel, legalism, and antinomianism.

²⁴⁰ Keller, “Defining a Gospel Movement.”

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid. In *Center Church*, Keller defines revival as “an intensification of the normal operations of the Spirit (conviction of sin, regeneration and sanctification, assurance of grace) through the

3:6-8). A gospel movement is the result of two factors: a gardener and the Lord. The gardener's skills and diligence are vital, yet not as foundational as are the soil conditions and the weather. God is the only one who can make the garden flourish by opening individual hearts to the Word. A gardener can have effective skills and works diligently for the garden, but he or she cannot make it flourish. Keller contends that only the Lord can make plants grow.²⁴⁵

Keller insists that although Christians cannot produce a gospel movement, they can, and should, steward a gospel movement.²⁴⁶ He feels one of the most strategic ways of stewarding a gospel movement is planting churches in the city: "The vigorous, continual planting of new congregations is the single most crucial strategy for (1) the numerical growth of the body of Christ in a city and (2) the continual corporate renewal and revival of the existing churches in a city."²⁴⁷ In this sense, RPC accentuates the significance of church planting by making it a final core value:

We believe that at the heart of the heart of any gospel movement in a city is church planting. On the one hand, we know that church planting is not everything that is needed. Existing churches must be renewed with the gospel. Christians must evangelize, do justice, and integrate their faith with their work. Educational institutions and arts initiatives and many non-profits must be started. And yet the best way to renew older churches and increase the number of Christians, ministers, and givers in a city is to plant new churches. This is a high priority of Redeemer We are therefore committed to planting (and helping others plant) hundreds of new churches, while at the same time working for a renewal of gospel vitality in all the congregations of the city.²⁴⁸

ordinary means of grace (preaching the Word, prayer, and the sacraments)." His definition clearly shows that revival and a gospel movement are God's work. See Keller, *Center Church*, 54-61.

²⁴⁵ Keller, *Center Church*, 371-74.

²⁴⁶ Keller, "Defining a Gospel Movement."

²⁴⁷ Timothy J. Keller, "Why Plant Churches?," *Redeemer City to City*, 1, accessed May 4, 2018, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5315f2e5e4b04a00bc148f24/t/59518ca22cba5eba4502d0ae/1498516642787/Why+Plant+Churches.pdf>.

²⁴⁸ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Redeemer Vision and Values."

RPC founded Redeemer Church Planting Center, as a part of RPC, to support church planting. In 2008, it became Redeemer City to City,²⁴⁹ as a separate nonprofit, and CTC helps start new churches in NYC and global cities.²⁵⁰

Redeemer City to City

CTC's mission statement clarifies that it focuses on leadership development and urban mission to cultivate a gospel movement: "Our mission is to help leaders build gospel movements in cities."²⁵¹

Leadership development. CTC thinks that one of the most central CTC responsibilities for a gospel movement is training church planters: "The church planter is the key to citywide gospel renewal. Redeemer City to City trains leaders worldwide to build gospel movements in their cities."²⁵² This statement demonstrates that CTC places its highest priority on training leaders to cultivate gospel movements.

CTC aims to prepare a particular kind of leaders: "movement leaders who are gospel-centered, context-sensitive, city-serving, and collaborative."²⁵³ According to Keller, a *gospel-centered* Christian is a person who realizes fundamental differences among the gospel ("faith -> justification + good works"), legalism ("faith + good works -> justification"), and antinomianism ("faith -> justification – good works"). *Context-sensitive* leaders are those who avoid both unhealthy attitudes of over-accommodation

²⁴⁹ Redeemer City to City will be referred to as CTC.

²⁵⁰ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Redeemer Guide."

²⁵¹ Redeemer City to City, "Redeemer City to City – Home," *Redeemer City to City*, accessed May 5, 2018, <https://www.redeemercitytocity.com/>.

²⁵² Redeemer City to City, "Fellows Program" (unpublished brochure, Redeemer City to City, New York, 2017).

²⁵³ Redeemer City to City, "A Gospel Movement That Will Take All of Us" (unpublished brochure, Redeemer City to City, New York, 2017).

and cultural withdrawal, and perform “contextualized gospel ministry.” Therefore, they can challenge, connect, and adapt the culture without compromising the gospel.²⁵⁴ *City-serving* leaders are Christians who serve the city—not merely with word—but also deed in terms of social justice. In addition, these believers indicate those who are eager to integrate faith and work. Lastly, these individuals are *collaborative* for a gospel movement even though they are working in all different denominations and possess various theological backgrounds.²⁵⁵

CTC cultivates movement leaders through training and coaching: “We *equip* leaders and church planters with unique skills and mindsets that contribute to fruitful ministry We *walk alongside church planters* during every phase of launching their congregation and serving the gospel movement (emphasis added).”²⁵⁶ CTC furnishes a variety of training and coaching programs for NYC:

Apprentice Program: a nine-month program to accelerate the development of 22- to 28-year-olds exploring their callings to vocational ministry or significant leadership role.

Seminary: a Master of Arts in Biblical Studies offered through partnership with Reformed Theological Seminary.

City Ministry Year: a practical theology program for ministry in New York designed by Tim Keller around four tracks—preaching, mission, pastoral ministry, and leadership.

Fellows Program: a one-year training program for church planters, one year to two years out from planting new congregations.

Incubator: a two-year training and coaching program to support pastors in the most critical phase of launching new congregations.

Incubator Borough Collectives: A two-year training program tailored for bi-vocational planters and pastors, and offered in locations outside Manhattan.

²⁵⁴ Timothy J. Keller, “How a Gospel Movement Works,” *Redeemer City to City*, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://www.redeemercitytocity.com/blog/2017/11/14/how-a-gospel-movement-works>.

²⁵⁵ Redeemer City to City, “A Gospel Movement That Will Take All of Us.”

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

City Lab: A bimonthly gathering for leaders from 60 + NYC churches for training and mutual encouragement.²⁵⁷

Moreover, it provides international church planters with a number of programs:

Incubator: This is our key two-year program to serve, train, and develop urban church planters. The Incubator is delivered through local trainers; participants get practical help with writing their action plan, ministry development, and preaching.

Intensive: For leaders who live in cities where Incubator is not offered, the Intensive is the Incubator curriculum repackaged into a multiweek training.

Train the Trainer: This program empowers local leaders by orienting them to CTC's Incubator curriculum, so that they can facilitate Incubator with church planters in their city or region.

Gospel in the City: This two-day learning experience provides a theological and practical understanding of how the gospel shapes the heart, a church, and a city.

Coaching: New church planters are paired with a CTC-trained, experienced church planter, and coached to navigate ministry challenges and apply the gospel to their lives.²⁵⁸

Online Learning: Individuals or church teams access practical, experience-based classes on such topics as ministry design, calling, and movement dynamics.

CTC Partnership: This two-year program takes a cohort of established U.S. churches, partners them financially with a new church or network in a global city, and provides customized training from Tim Keller and the CTC team.²⁵⁹

Keller's book *Center Church* is a key resource based on all training and coaching programs. Furthermore, CTC offers various participant resources on the basis of more than twenty years of ministry experiences.²⁶⁰

Urban church planting. CTC is committed to planting churches in global cities to steward a gospel movement for two reasons. Initially, it recognizes the

²⁵⁷ Redeemer City to City, "A Gospel Movement That Will Take All of Us."

²⁵⁸ Redeemer City to City, "2017 Annual Report," *Redeemer City to City*, 8, accessed May 5, 2018, <https://www.redeemercitytocity.com/2017-annual-report/>.

²⁵⁹ Redeemer City to City, "A Gospel Movement That Will Take All of Us."

²⁶⁰ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Redeemer Guide." CTC introduces a great number of online courses, articles, books, and videos. See Redeemer City to City, "Resources," *Redeemer City to City*, accessed May 5, 2018, <https://www.redeemercitytocity.com/resources/>. In addition to these resources, Gospel in Life provides a variety of sermons, studies, manuals, and papers. See Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Gospel in Life," *Gospel in Life*, accessed May 6, 2018, <https://gospelinlife.com/>.

unavoidability of the urban mission. It contends that over 50 percent of the world's population resides in cities and that the percentage is being augmented to 70 percent by 2050.²⁶¹ This situation implies that although Christian leaders do not go to cities to minister, the cities are coming to them.²⁶² In other words, urban mission is not optional, but it is an unavoidable reality for this as well as the next generation.

Second, CTC argues for cities' strategic importance in redemptive history: "Biblically, cities play a central role in redemptive history. The establishing of the city of Jerusalem, the call to bless the city of Babylon, and the spread of Christianity through the cities of the Roman Empire—these were all moments when God used the influence of cities to mobilize his people to serve and care for the whole nation."²⁶³ Keller also—in his introduction video to CTC, titled "What Is Redeemer City to City?"—admits the importance of cities, explaining that "the city is the most strategic place for gospel ministry."²⁶⁴ CTC and Keller's assertions demonstrate that cities can play a pivotal role for a gospel ministry.²⁶⁵

The fact that CTC and Keller stress the crucial role of cities for redemptive history indicates that they hold a positive view of the city. This positive viewpoint is in contrast to the negative perspective of some Christians who have a tendency to highlight

²⁶¹ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Redeemer Guide."

²⁶² Keller, *Center Church*, 88.

²⁶³ Redeemer Presbyterian Church and Redeemer City to City, "The New York Project: Why New York?," *The New York Project*, accessed May 5, 2018, <http://newyorkproject.com/why-new-york/>. The New York Project is a joint CTC and RPC strategy.

²⁶⁴ Timothy J. Keller, "What Is Redeemer City to City?," *Vimeo*, accessed May 5, 2018, <https://vimeo.com/8770037>. Keller elucidates the significance of cities based on biblical grounds, too. See also Timothy J. Keller, "Why God Made Cities," *Squarespace*, accessed May 5, 2018, http://static1.squarespace.com/static/5315f2e5e4b04a00bc148f24/t/53556fb2e4b0b8b008774203/1398108082122/Why_God_Made_Cities_by_Tim_Keller.1.pdf.

²⁶⁵ Stephen Um and Justin Buzzard articulate the importance of cities in terms of serving as centers of power, culture, and worship in Stephen T. Um and Justin Buzzard, *Why Cities Matter: To God, the Culture, and the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 21-35.

inner-city problems, like poverty, crime, and, homelessness. With this tendency, their urban ministry frequently concentrates too much on ways to fix these problems. As a result, when they think of a city, the first thing that comes to their mind is a place of numerous difficulties. This negative view of the city causes some individuals to be apt to retreat from the city. CTC and Keller, though, maintain a positive perspective of the city because a city is the Lord's idea. Keller attests that "God is also building a city. He is a city architect [and] an urban planner."²⁶⁶ The Lord allows people to establish a city in which he can live with his people. In this sense, RPC additionally holds a positive view of a city and encourages Christians to live in a city:

At Redeemer we hold a positive, balanced, Biblically-rooted view of the city. We are very positive about the city—seeing it as perhaps the most strategic place for Christians to live and minister today, and also valuing its many benefits for human life and flourishing. As a result, we encourage Christians to stay and live in the city (though not legalistically). We want our leaders to be energized by and enjoy city living.²⁶⁷

CTC makes an effort to help leaders plant "the gospel-centered church" in cities. Keller acknowledges that although a city is God's concept, sin has twisted the city and turned it into a place of problems, pain, and suffering.²⁶⁸ A powerful way of healing a broken city under the influence of sin is building "the gospel-centered church." CTC describes it in this manner:

We are helping leaders build a particular kind of church: The gospel-centered church. We believe cities need churches that are not just gospel-believing but gospel-centered churches where the gospel is fluently spoken and integrated into every component of life. This starts with acknowledging a need for the gospel alone as "the power of God" (Rom 1:16) that propels a community to humbly, yet boldly seek the shalom of the city. We help leaders build churches where the gospel is preached faithfully and lived out for the common good, disciples are formed, resources are shared, and the poor are served.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ Keller, "Why God Made Cities," 9.

²⁶⁷ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, "Redeemer Vision and Values."

²⁶⁸ Keller, "Why God Made Cities," 9.

²⁶⁹ Redeemer City to City, "A Gospel Movement That Will Take All of Us."

CTC cultivates “the gospel-centered church” in NYC and global cities through training movement leaders. According to the 2017 CTC annual report, CTC programs trained sixteen thousand leaders. Fifty-seven CTC networks have been formed to develop relationships with one another in the same city or region. These networks aim to collaborate to plant churches and reach their cities with the gospel. Through these networks, 495 new churches received their start.²⁷⁰

Conclusion

Keller notes that the gospel compels Christians to engage in four ministry fronts, including personal conversion, community formation, social justice, and cultural renewal. In this sense, he remarks,

The experience of grace inspires evangelism as well as intimate, glorious worship of the God who saved us. It creates the new transparency and openness that makes deep fellowship possible. The grace orientation of the gospel humbles us and gives new passion for justice. And the nature of the gospel helps us discern idolatry in ourselves and in our culture that distorts the way we do our work and live our lives in society.²⁷¹

Keller maintains that the gospel makes these ministry fronts interdependent on one another and provides motivation for planting gospel-centered churches, as well. Consequently, RPC endeavors to help plant gospel-centered churches that share the same five ministry fronts driven by the gospel.²⁷²

Believing that process-oriented evangelism is more appropriate and effective than are evangelistic programs in a postmodern context, Keller focuses on creating an evangelistic dynamic at RPC through such varied strategic evangelistic approaches as apologetics, contextualization, and evangelistic worship. In addition, the discipleship center at RPC is community groups in which leaders are identified, mentored, trained,

²⁷⁰ Redeemer City to City, “2017 Annual Report,” 4.

²⁷¹ Keller, *Center Church*, 291.

²⁷² Keller, “Five Ministry Fronts in the City,” 2.

and deployed because Keller thinks discipleship happens in a community context. Furthermore, RPC enacts mercy ministry and social justice through the Diaconate for RPC members, and HFNY for NYC residents. The CFW is RPC's cultural engagement arm to assist believers in integrating their faith and work. Finally, RPC helps start planting gospel-centered churches in NYC and global cities, through CTC training programs and ministries, to cultivate gospel movements. The next chapter articulates what research questions are and how those questions are answered in the dissertation.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Timothy Keller argues that the gospel enables a church to do wholistic ministry. He delineates the problem of a common tendency to place every church somewhere on ideological diversification—from a liberal side (concentrating on social justice and cultural engagement), to a conservative side (focusing on evangelism and discipleship). Keller contends that this ideological classification can be nullified by the gospel dynamic, saying,

The gospel makes a church impossible to categorize in this way, for it brings both deep, powerful changes that convert people from their sin and deep powerful social changes as well. It defies the values of our hearts (selfishness and idolatry) and of the world (power, status, recognition, wealth). The gospel pattern is triumph through weakness, wealth through poverty, power through service. Grasping this changes our attitude toward the poor, our own status, and our wealth and careers. Rather than emphasizing mainly evangelism (as conservative churches do) or mainly social justice (as liberal churches do), we intentionally set out to give a very high emphasis to both—employing a holistic approach that connects the people in our church to the city through both evangelistic proclamation and ministries of justice and mercy. A gospel-centered church should combine the “zeals” that are not typically seen together in the same church.¹

Expressing it differently, the gospel makes Christians passionate to saving the lost; it additionally enables them to experience a new zeal for justice.² Keller claims that “[The] full approach to the gospel creates a church that does not fit neatly into the traditional ‘conservative/sectarian’ nor ‘liberal/mainline’ categories.”³ In other words, Keller

¹ Timothy J. Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 292.

² *Ibid.*, 291.

³ Timothy J. Keller, “The Gospel—Key to Change,” *Cru*, accessed September 28, 2017, <https://www.cru.org/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/the-gospel-key-to-change.html>.

maintains that the gospel dynamic negates the common tendency and creates wholistic ministry in a church.

Issues Discussed and Answered

The introduction to this study presented the seven issues pertaining to Keller's integration of evangelism and social concern. These questions were divided into four main subject chapters: a biography of Keller's life, his understanding of the gospel, the gospel dynamic, and the five ministry areas at RPC. The following matters were evaluated and answered in the course of those four chapters.

First of all, how did Keller's life impact his ministry that stresses the integration of evangelism and social concern? This question was examined through the biography of Keller's life and his ministry at RPC. During his early life, Keller longed for a third camp, which is neither social activism nor traditional or fundamental churches. Through InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at Bucknell, he experienced the possibility of the existence of a third party, in which there is a group of Christians whose regard for social justice is based on God's nature. During his first pastorate, Keller emphasized not only evangelism and discipleship through Christ-centered preaching, but also social engagement on the basis of theological foundation. After he planted RPC, he clarified that RPC as a third camp is different from both twentieth-century liberalism and modern mainline Protestantism. In other words, RPC concentrates on both the word-and-deed ministry by launching CTC to promote church planting in the world, HFNY to work for social justice, and CFW to engage in cultural renewal.

Second, how does Keller understand "the gospel for saving individuals" (God-sin-Christ-faith) and "the gospel for renewing creation" (creation-fall-redemption-restoration)? The response to this question was addressed in the third chapter, which focuses on articulating Keller's understanding of the gospel. He contends that there are two ways to reply to the question, "What is the gospel?" On the one hand, if one focuses on how a sinner can have a right relationship with God, the question means "what must I

do to be saved?” To expound on this question, Keller articulates who God is; what sin is; who Christ is and what he did; and what faith is. On the other hand, if one highlights what God will complete in history through Jesus Christ, this question implies “what hope is there for the world?” To answer the question, Keller clarifies how creation was; the results of the fall; what Christ did; and what restoration looks like and how it will be fulfilled.

Third, what is Keller’s definition of the gospel? What is the relationship between GFI and GFC? Is Keller’s view of the gospel a foundation of his integration of evangelism and social responsibility? He provides his definition of the gospel: “God has entered the world in Jesus Christ to achieve a salvation that we could not achieve for ourselves which now 1) converts and transforms individuals, forming them into a new humanity, and eventually 2) will renew the whole world and all creation. This is the ‘good news’—The gospel.”⁴ In his understanding of the gospel, GFI and GFC are interwoven into one gospel. For Keller, two aspects of the gospel—one focusing on the individual aspect of salvation and the other accentuating the corporate aspect of salvation—are not separate and different gospels, but the necessary comprehension of one gospel.

His understanding of the gospel is a foundation for the integration of evangelism and social concern because the gospel—which argues for evangelism and discipleship—also, at the same time, requires assuming social responsibilities, such as social justice and cultural renewal. In other words, the gospel asks Christians to participate in both evangelism and social concern in church ministry. Keller additionally asserts that although GFI and GFC both are required, GFI is primary because GFC is based on GFI. GFC cannot stand alone as the gospel without GFI. This fact implies that GFC must not be substituted for GFI and be confused with GFI. Hence, although the wholeness of the gospel affirms the validity of social concern for the world, it must not be at the core of the church without evangelism and discipleship.

⁴ Keller, “The Gospel—Key to Change.”

Fourth, why and how does Keller's understanding of the gospel promote personal impact (changed lives), as well as social impact (social justice and cultural engagement)? This question was handled in the fourth chapter, "The Dynamic of the Gospel." The reason the gospel has both a personal and social impact is that the gospel, the good news of gracious acceptance, has the power to change human beings from the inside out. According to Keller, human beings are trapped in either legalism or antinomianism without this unique recognition of radical grace. Those who fall into legalism cannot experience joy, astonishment, or tears because they earn salvation through their own efforts. They are not transformed from the inside, but are prideful or despairing on the basis of behavioral compliance with their standards. In addition, antinomianism cannot transform humanity because those who fall into it believe that the Lord accepts them no matter how they live. Therefore, they merely conduct their lives according to their desire and preference.

Keller holds that the gospel causes men and women to be transformed into Christlikeness because it smites a core human problem, *sin*, from which all behavioral *sins* are produced. He defines sin as "the internal distortion of heart" that creates the extreme need of human beings for approval, respect, and security. This definition of sin implies that it makes them crave those with their own power, apart from God. As a result, when they think they achieve those, they become full of pride, but still are afraid of losing approval and security. In this sense, Keller thinks fear and pride, which sin causes, are two fundamental human drives.

According to Keller, the gospel attacks pride and fear and assures adamant security and priceless identity in Christ: "[In the gospel, human beings realize that they] are more flawed and sinful than [they] ever dared believe, yet [they] are more loved and accepted than [they] ever dared hope."⁵ The initial part of this statement assails people's

⁵ Keller, "The Gospel—Key to Change."

pride because it clarifies that their sin is so awful that innocent Jesus had to die for them. Simultaneously, the second part blasts fear because it elucidates that Christ greatly loves them, even though their sin is so horrible. Keller is convinced that the gospel only deals with sin; collapses pride and fear; and brings about personal changes.

Moreover, Keller believes that the gospel causes such social impacts as social justice and cultural renewal. The gospel is not just a wonderful plan for *my life*, but a wonderful plan for *the world*. It concerns God's kingdom to redeem and renew the world. Consequently, those who are saved by radical grace do not simply enjoy their wonderful life, but are interested in resisting the results of sin as a channel of God's grace. In other words, according to Keller, certain works (care for the poor and efforts to glorify the Lord through vocation) cannot save a man, but are the inevitable sign of the man's living faith.

Keller suggests three reasons that the gospel promotes social justice. First of all, the gospel offers believers a high view of justice because Jesus had to die on the cross to satisfy God's law and justice. Thus, believers should take seriously the law and justice, which require equality and love of one's neighbor. Second, the gospel furnishes Christians with a new attitude toward the poor because the gospel enables believers to identify themselves—the spiritually hopeless poor—through the materially hopeless poor. Therefore, they can treat the materially poor just as Jesus treated them (the spiritually poor). Finally, the gospel provides the poor with a valued identity in Christ. The poor tend to identify themselves as useless losers according to worldly value, but—in and through the gospel—they are valued as children of God. They can start their lives over with the power of the new identity in the gospel.

Keller maintains that the gospel boosts healthy cultural renewal based on two reasons. First, the gospel attacks the idea of triumphalism: Christians can and must correct the culture. The gospel enables believers to realize that they cannot renew the culture with their power. Furthermore, it gives them the humility to admit and praise unbelievers' contribution to the common good because the gospel clarifies that the Lord

works in, and through, sinners. Second, the gospel assails withdrawal mentality: Christianity should not be involved in cultural issues, but just in individual piety. The gospel asks believers to respectfully challenge the fallen culture because both believers' private and public lives are supposed to be lived for God's glory. In other words, according to Keller, the gospel possesses a healthy and paradoxical balance between triumphalism and withdrawal mentality.

Fifth, what is Keller's understanding of the church's mission in terms of the relationship between evangelism and social concern? This question was examined at the end of the fourth chapter. Keller claims that the church's purpose is making disciples; he prefers this succinct statement because it enables the church to concentrate on what it alone can and should do. His perspective on what disciples look like, though, might be different from others' viewpoint on that topic. According to him, creating disciples implies that believers must be prepared for evangelizing sinners; loving neighbors by demonstrating justice and mercy; and integrating faith with their vocation. It seems that he supports the church's dual mission: preaching the Word and doing justice.

The fact that one of the church's purposes is doing justice does not mean that one of the missions of the church is cultural transformation. Keller disagrees with the idea of social reformation through the church. He contends that the church's job helps believers to hold the gospel worldview that can lead to social implications in their lives, like family, school, and workplace. In other words, Keller supports missional duality in a sense that the church assists the congregation in recognizing how believers live in both the private and public area with the gospel worldview—not a sense that the job of the church brings about cultural transformation.

Based on this comprehension of the church's mission, he expounds on the relationship between evangelism and social concern with three points. First, evangelism is distinct from social concern. Keller maintains that the gospel is neither advice nor a way of life, but the good news about what Jesus Christ has accomplished. Because the

gospel is the good news, evangelism must not be social work, but a verbal witness. Consequently, in Keller's understanding, evangelism must not be reduced to social engagement.

Second, in principle, Keller argues that evangelism is more significant than is social justice for two reasons. Initially, evangelism is the most distinctive work that only the church can achieve for the world. It is possible for nonbelievers to feed the poor, while it is impossible for them to share the gospel with the poor. This job can be performed solely by the church. In addition, he advocates evangelism priority, compared with social involvement, because saving lost souls has an eternally profound effect on the poor, while feeding the poor has just a temporary effect on them.

Finally, Keller insists that, practically, an inseparable connection exists between evangelism and social concern. Christians' social services allow them to get an opportunity for gospel presentation to unbelievers. In other words, the more Christians are engaged with unbelievers by ensuring justice, the more effective their evangelism will be. In a practical ministry context, as well, it is not possible for word ministry to be separated from deed ministry because humanity consists of body and soul. When believers conduct evangelism and discipleship for the poor, they cannot love and serve the people in word alone without meeting their practical needs through deeds. As a result, Keller affirms that the church must prioritize evangelism, and evangelism must accompany social concern.

Sixth, what are specific examples of personal conversion and community formation embodied by Keller's understanding of the gospel at RPC? This question was answered and examined in the fifth chapter. Believing that process-oriented evangelism is more appropriate and effective than are evangelistic programs in a postmodern context, he focuses on establishing an evangelistic dynamic at RPC. First of all, to create an evangelistic dynamic, Keller continues teaching his congregation the direct applicability of the gospel, which removes pride, fear, pessimism, and indifference that are the four most common evangelism barriers. Second, he encourages believers at RPC to participate

in “every-member Word ministry,” which is organic, relational, Word-deploying, and active. Third, Keller helps Christians to possess relational integrity in three senses: likeness to unbelievers, unlikeness to them, and participation in their life. Finally, he creates a graded evangelism level—from informal and organic, to formal and strategic.

Keller contends that evangelism has two aspects: apologetics and contextualization. The former is unavoidable under the influence of postmodernism because non-Christians would like to know the reason they have to believe the gospel. Through the apologetical approach to evangelism, Keller makes an effort to show that unbelievers have less warrant for their faith than believers do for the Christian faith. According to him, the latter is inevitable too because there is no culture-free way of sharing the gospel even though the gospel itself is universal. Thus, the purpose of contextualization is both retaining the essential gospel message and adapting any nonessential languages to clarify the core gospel message to unbelievers.

Keller argues for “evangelistic worship,” in which the service objective is not either evangelism or edification, but worshiping the Lord. According to Keller, this goal makes the Sunday service work both for evangelism and edification. He asks pastors for gospel-centered preaching to make this happen. Because the gospel is the fundamental ground for justification (evangelism for unbelievers) and sanctification (edification for believers), gospel-centered preaching can result in both evangelism and edification. Other than gospel-centered preaching, Keller suggests three helpful points for evangelistic worship: 1) thinking that a number of skeptics are in the church; 2) making worship understandable to nonbelievers; and 3) giving them the chance to respond to the gospel in and after service.

Keller maintains that the gospel is the essential ground for community formation for three reasons. First, according to GFC, humanity’s relationship with God directly affects human relationships with others. Expressing it differently, from Keller’s perspective, no possibility exists for establishing a Christian community without restoring

the relationship with the Lord through the gospel. Second, Keller insists that experiencing the radical gospel grace is so intense that it creates a true Christian community just as battle survivors are inclined to share a deep bond. In other words, because encountering the grace of the gospel is the most intense experience, it enables Christians to be united with other believers even though they are in a different social class, race, or culture. Third, the gospel breaks down a number of barriers to community formation, such as envy, pride, inferiority, and superiority.

Keller regards community formation as spiritual formation (discipleship) because spiritual growth does not happen in classes, but in family-type communities in which the gospel implications are worked out. His discipleship view demonstrates that the discipleship center at RPC consists of community groups, in which leaders are identified, mentored, trained, and deployed. Therefore, in a community group, one of the leader's most significant responsibilities is discipling disciplers. Additionally, a community group leader keeps encouraging his or her members to participate in both various conferences and classes and a number of volunteer works for RPC and their neighborhood to promote healthy growth in grace.

Seventh, what are detailed ministries of social justice, cultural renewal, and church planting at RPC? This inquiry was studied and answered in the fifth chapter. RPC enacts mercy ministry and social justice through the Diaconate and HFNY. The Diaconate—a group of men and women—is RPC's arm for mercy ministry to members and regular attendees for providing wholistic care to those in great need. It utilizes different strategic ways for satisfying the requirements of the poor at RPC: financial assistance for basic living expenses; spiritual support through prayer, spiritual guidance, and accountability; subsidies for counseling services; and job-search coaching.

RPC participated in social-justice outreach for NYC by establishing and supporting HFNY, which is a separate nonprofit organization. This means that RPC does not work directly for the marginalized in NYC, especially in a sense of community

development and social transformation. It instead supports the poor in NYC through HFNY, which strengthens existing nonprofit institutions aiding those in need. HFNY assists the nonprofit organizations with three practical strategies: furnishing volunteers and funding and maximizing affiliates' capacity by offering training and consulting to workers in affiliates.

Keller is confident that the gospel exerts profound influence both on personal and public life because the gospel is a lens through which Christians comprehensively interpret the reality that affects every area of their lives. Hence, from his viewpoint, the crystal-clear realization of the gospel must impact ways believers think and work for their vocational world. RPC founded CFW to help Christians think about their jobs in the light of the gospel. CFW provides a variety of programs, classes, and events to assist believers in applying the dynamic gospel power to their work.

All CFW ministry has three strategic aspects: connecting, equipping, and mobilizing. First of all, it strives to connect believers with other Christians in a similar vocational industry. Community formation within a comparable vocational group is vital because these Christians can sharpen their vocational purpose together in light of the gospel worldview. HFNY furnishes numerous vocational groups and large monthly events. Furthermore, CFW greatly highlights theological-discipleship training to help believers be prepared theologically and spiritually for their vocation. This training helps Christians have a theological framework of what it means to be Christian in their jobs. CFW offers numerous types of training, like Gotham Fellowship, intensive discipleship programs, and annual conferences. Moreover, CFW makes an effort to mobilize individuals through two programs: Arts Ministry, and Entrepreneurship and Innovation.

Keller is eager to help plant gospel-centered churches that share RPC core values for stewarding a gospel movement. Such a movement occurs when, through the Spirit's power, the gospel is strongly rediscovered and becomes a dynamic force in human lives. The individual aspect of a gospel movement is that nominal Christians

become converted; sleeping Christians awaken; and nonbelievers attend a church and are converted. In addition, gospel-centered churches experiencing the corporate aspect of the movement have a healthy balance among five characteristics. They are biblically solid teachings of the Word; anointed service and powerful prayer; intimate fellowship and building communities; bold evangelism toward unbelievers; and active social-justice involvement.

RPC founded CTC to help steward a gospel movement faithfully. As a separate nonprofit, CTC emphasizes planting churches in NYC and global cities. Its strategic methods of supporting church planting are leadership development and urban mission. CTC holds that its highest priority is training church planters to be movement leaders, who are gospel-centered, context-sensitive, city-serving, and collaborative. CTC offers a number of training and coaching programs for church planters in NYC and global cities; an apprentice program; and seminary, intensive, and online learning. CTC is dedicated to urban-church planting because of rapid urbanization and cities' strategic significance in redemptive history, as well.

Areas for Further Study

This dissertation has concentrated on why and how Keller sought to integrate evangelism and social ministry. This emphasis implies that the research has been limited to a specific topic, and significant questions exist pertaining to the integration for more study.

First, one can pursue the question of if Keller's integration actually works in the RPC neighborhood. The research has focused on what Keller believes, argues, and teaches, not on what happened in the neighborhood. Putting it differently, this work does not answer how one knows whether or not social justice and cultural renewal are actually produced. Future researchers could help respond to the inquiry by performing demographic and sociological studies with respect to that subject matter.

The second area for additional study develops the biographical information with regard to Keller's life and ministry. Because Christians' lives can form theological thinking, it is important to further develop Keller's biography. This and other dissertations concerning Keller, though, are limited in scope to available resources, like the introduction to his books, his sermons, and his articles. One can enhance the research by interviewing Keller, his family members, and core colleagues. The researcher endeavored to hold an interview with Keller, but such interview did not take place.

Final Reflections

Timothy Keller contributes to today's Christianity with three points. First of all, he communicates the old orthodox gospel in relevant ways to unbelievers under the postmodernism influence. His emphasis on process-oriented evangelism, apologetics, contextualization, evangelistic worship, and evangelistic preaching is helpful for those who are unconverted to understand the gospel based on scriptural grounds, rather than on their worldly perspective. As a result, a great number of unbelievers in NYC attend RPC, comprehend the gospel, and confess Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

Second, Keller insists that the gospel works not simply for justification, but for sanctification, too. His assertion means that Christians grow spiritually—not by deciding to follow Jesus more and more diligently, but through understanding God's grace more clearly and profoundly. In other words, he feels that discipleship also depends on encountering radical gospel grace, just like justification.

Lastly, one of Keller's greatest contributions to Christianity today is his integration of evangelism and social concern based on the gospel. According to him, radical gospel grace fundamentally changes how Christians interpret and live both their private and public lives; thus, for Keller, social justice and cultural renewal are neither the poison of liberalism nor optional church activities. Those are necessary ministries of the church, which is founded and driven by the gospel.

Keller's RPC ministry possesses a healthy integration among evangelism, discipleship, social justice, and cultural renewal. Keller does not de-emphasize evangelism and discipleship to participate in social justice and cultural renewal because the gospel clearly argues for the importance of evangelism and discipleship. Furthermore, he does not underestimate social justice and cultural renewal as barriers to evangelism and discipleship. Keller rather recognizes believers' participation in social justice and cultural renewal as avenues of evangelism and discipleship. Consequently, his integration of evangelism and social concern at RPC might be a healthy model for both traditional and liberal churches.

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ABSTRACT

THE INTEGRATION OF EVANGELISM AND SOCIAL CONCERN IN THE MINISTRY OF TIMOTHY KELLER

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The goal of this dissertation is articulating the integration of evangelism and social concern in Keller's ministry. It also investigates if this integration is based on his understanding of the wholeness of the gospel.

The work has six chapters for achieving this objective. Chapter 1 treats introductory matters. It suggests the need for this study regarding the integration of evangelism and social concern because tension about the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility has existed for over a century. This chapter includes seven research questions, backgrounds, methodology, a limitation, and delimitations.

Chapter 2 reviews Keller's life experiences that have shaped his understanding of the gospel and ministry. Because no works are currently published about Keller's life, the introduction to his books, his sermons, and Redeemer's home page constitute primary resources. This biography helps grasp the development of his comprehension of the gospel, and his evangelism and social ministry integration.

Chapter 3 emphasizes clarifying Keller's understanding of the gospel. His gospel definition is furnished. The chapter illustrates how he expounds his comprehension of the gospel with two frames. The first one has four themes: God, sin, Christ, and faith. It concerns what must I do to be saved? The second frame additionally has four themes: creation, the fall, redemption, and restoration. It answers what hope is

there for this world? Keller contends they must be interwoven for biblical understanding of the gospel.

Chapter 4 elucidates why and how the gospel promotes personal and social impacts. The chapter demonstrates that radical gospel grace deals with the fundamental human problem—sin underneath sins. Thus, the gospel changes the human heart and motives, and ways the gospel brings about active engagement in social justice and cultural renewal.

Chapter 5 investigates how Keller's understanding of the gospel shaped Redeemer Presbyterian Church five ministry areas: evangelism, community formation (discipleship), social justice, cultural renewal, and church planting.

Chapter 6 provides a brief summary and areas for further study. It concludes the dissertation with thoughts regarding Keller's contributions to Christianity.

VITA

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