



REDEEMER

MEMBERSHIP COURSE

GOSPEL

MEMBERSHIP COURSE

PART ONE

GOSPEL

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CITY

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MOVEMENT

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MEMBERSHIP

All media can be found on our app and website or at:

redeemerwh.org/gospel

INTRODUCTION

THEOLOGICAL VISION

"Between one's doctrinal beliefs and ministry practices should be a well-conceived vision for how to bring the gospel to bear on the particular cultural setting and historical moment...This explains how churches can be deeply divided over ministry expressions and methods, such as music, preaching style, approach to organization and leadership, forms of outreach, and so on." — Tim Keller

Typically, in a membership class like this, we would spend time talking about what we believe and what we do. Both are important. However, it is the step in between doctrine and practice that we are going to focus on – what Dr. Timothy Keller, in his book *Center Church*, referred to as **theological vision**. A church's theological vision is more practical than doctrinal beliefs and more theological than an action plan for doing ministry. It is a faithful restatement of the gospel with implications for life, ministry, and mission in a distinct cultural time and setting, with a particularly local emphasis.

At Redeemer, there are three core principles of our vision. We are seeking to be a people who are:

Fluent in the **gospel**, and
For the **city**;
Igniting and cultivating a gospel **movement** of churches and ministries that renew Winter Haven and Polk County.

Each of those core principles – gospel, city, and movement – exist along an axis. In each case, there is a danger of losing the center and drifting to one extreme or the other.



1. The Gospel Axis. At one end of the Gospel Axis is **legalism** – the belief that we can save ourselves by how we live. At the other end is **relativism** – the view that it doesn't matter how we live, because, God, if he even exists, loves everyone the same.

The gospel is neither legalism nor relativism. We are saved by grace alone, through faith. Not our works. But that faith is never alone. Grace results in a changed life. The power of the gospel can be lost to either error. Therefore, we must be constantly recalibrating our theology towards that center by repenting of our sin and also our righteousness.



2. The City Axis. At the one end of the City Axis is **under-contextualization** or **under-adaptation** – not holding to doctrinal and moral distinctives, but relativizing truth and doctrine, and, thus, becoming of the world. At the other end is over-contextualization or over-adaptation – the church becoming irrelevant and inward-facing, and, thus, not being in the world. The way of faithful missionary engagement is to be in the world but not of it. To be faithful and to be present. We must constantly be reorienting our mission towards that center by intentionally living, working, and playing in the city, while at the same time respectfully resisting the idols of the city.



3. The Movement Axis. At one end of the Movement Axis is structure or **institutionalism** – a strong emphasis on theological tradition and organization that makes a church resistant to change and makes it hard to find common ground with other churches and ministries. At the other end is **anti-institutionalism** – no identification with theological or organization structure. Every movement must eventually institutionalize or it will die. But if it succumbs to institutional-ism, it will quickly become off-mission. Biblically, the church is both an organism and an organization. We must constantly be reorganizing the church towards that center by maintaining institutional integrity while also being careful not to quench the spirit.

Redeemer's membership course is divided into four parts, corresponding to the three parts of our theological vision – Gospel, City, Movement – and our membership vows. For each part, there is material we ask you to first engage with personally. Once you have done so, we then ask you to attend a 1-2 hour group module that is designed to allow for conversation and Q&A. Each group module is offered 1-2 times per year.

If, for some reason, you are not able to attend one of the GOSPEL group modules, you may also arrange to have a “gospel conversation” with one of our pastors or leaders. If you miss the CITY group module, you can schedule a meeting with Drew Bennett to discuss the mission and vision of Redeemer. If you miss the MOVEMENT group module, you can schedule a meeting with Drew Bennett to discuss the multiplication strategy of Redeemer. In the place of the DISTINCTIVES group module, you can schedule a meeting with Jonathan Winfree to discuss the distinctive beliefs and values of Redeemer, and responsibilities of church membership. Once you have completed all of those steps, you will be interviewed for membership by the elders of the church.

INTRODUCTION

GOSPEL FLUENCY

“The gospel is the principle article of all Christian doctrine, wherein the knowledge of all godliness consists. Most necessary is it that we know this article well, teach it to others, and beat it into their heads continually... The gospel is the chief article of Christian doctrine, for it is this doctrine which makes true Christians indeed. If the gospel (i.e. justification by faith) be once lost, then all true Christian doctrine is lost.” – Martin Luther

The apostle Paul described the gospel as the power of God (cf. Romans 1:16-17). Spiritual dynamite. In fact, every spiritual awakening throughout church history has been due to a rediscovery of the gospel. The Protestant Reformation, for example, was launched with Luther’s doctrine of justification by faith alone. The Medieval church had been languishing in a works-based religious system. Luther stumbled upon grace - as he read the Bible, and in the writings of the early church fathers (like Augustine), and the power came! The First Great Awakening in America (in the 1730s and 1740s), with George Whitfield. Even as recently as the ministry of Jack Miller (in the 1970s), pastor in Pennsylvania and author of the Sonship material. He mentored Tim Keller, who planted Redeemer NYC, and David Powlison, founder of CCEF. These men, and the resulting gospel resurgence over the past twenty years or so, as seen in the Gospel Coalition, for example, have shaped our leaders considerably. In fact, the planting of Redeemer (in 2008) was the result of a gospel awakening, or revival, among the 15-20 families that started the church together.

Gospel fluency refers to having a workable knowledge, not merely a theoretical knowledge, of the gospel. If you want to become fluent in Spanish, you can take a class or buy a curriculum. But these will only get you so far. You might pick up a few words. Eventually, you may be able to awkwardly carry on a conversation. But fluency is different. It refers to a mastery of the language and the concepts that becomes natural. Not forced. Most people have a beginning level understanding of the gospel. They know a few words. But it’s not (yet) their mother tongue. It still doesn’t come naturally to them. Their instincts – their emotions, their reactions, their real time life etc. - are not yet shaped by the truth of God’s love for them in Jesus... We are aiming for more than knowledge. Or, recitation. Our goal is competency. Gospel fluency.

Core Ministry Strategy:
The gospel is our curriculum.

The goal in the spiritual life is not to grow beyond the gospel, but to make sure you never do. Only the gospel is the power of God for salvation. We are changed by being continually renewed by believing the gospel. That's where all our good works come from. So, Redeemer's strategy for cultivating good marriages is to promote gospel fluency – to teach husbands and wives to live with the wisdom and energy to supernaturally love and serve their spouses, and not themselves. To love the other as Jesus has loved them. Similarly, our strategy for helping parents raise their children is to develop gospel fluency in them – so that they parent with grace. A deeper grasp of the gospel, not more effort or more information, is the key to spiritual transformation.

The following workbook is designed to encourage you towards gospel fluency. In each lesson you will listen to a sermon preached at Redeemer, then engage personally with it. Once you have completed all four sections, we ask that you attend a GOSPEL group module (1 hour) that is designed to allow for conversation and Q&A about the topics covered here. If, for some reason, you are not able to attend one of the GOSPEL group modules, you may also arrange to have a “gospel conversation” with one of our pastors or leaders.

ONE

GOSPEL DOCTRINE

“The essence of sin is man substituting himself for God. The essence of salvation is God substituting Himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be. God sacrifices Himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives which belong to God alone. God accepts penalties which belong to man alone.” – John Stott

The word gospel means “good news.” But if there is good news, then there is also bad news. The bad news is that we are lost. Alienated from God. Objects of wrath. The good news is that we can be saved. Through Jesus Christ. By grace alone. Not in our own strength, but only when we come to the end of our strength and rest in Jesus’ work for us.

The gospel is about righteousness (Romans 1:16-17). Rightness with God. The crucial question is, how can you be right with God?

Most people, when they realize they have been bad, try to make up for it by being good. They get religion. But Christianity is losing your religion. In Christianity, the righteousness that you need doesn’t come from you. It has to come to you. It’s not something you do and then give to God. It is something God does (in Jesus) and then gives to you, as a gift. It is an alien righteousness. It comes from outside. It is a passive righteousness. You don’t get it by doing. You have to stop doing. The solution to our badness is not our goodness. The solution to our badness is substitution. All you need to be a Christian is need.

All you need is nothing. But we all have something on our spiritual resume that we’re trusting in for righteousness. It’s a surprise for many, to learn that there are two kinds of lostness. Both irreligion and religion are strategies for keeping God out of your life. A religious person merely repents of their sins. They do not repent of the ways they are trying to make themselves righteousness apart from grace. A Christian, on the other hand, repents of both their sins and their righteousness. Faith is resting in Jesus.

Many people believe they are Christians, but, in truth, they are merely religious. The church is filled with people like the older brother in Jesus’ Parable of the Prodigal Son – good, moral, dutiful, but self-righteous and angry. This is why we begin our membership classes emphasizing this point. Most people who grew up going to church have had an experience of confessing their sins and asking God to forgive them.

Few have ever come to the place of confessing and forsaking the ways they are trying to earn their standing with God through their own moral efforts. Martin Lloyd-Jones, the famous 20th century preacher in London, would often ask people, “Are you a Christian?” If they responded with something like, “Well, I’m trying hard to be,” he would say, “Well, then you don’t understand Christianity at all.”

Listen to the sermon **“Gospel Doctrine”** from April 23, 2023, based on Romans 1:16-17. Then, answer the following questions. You can also take notes in the space below – highlighting what was most helpful to you and any questions you might have.

1. Read Romans 1:16-17 and write the verses in the space below. What stands out to you as you read?

2. What is the “good news” of Christianity? Using your own words.

3. What is righteousness? How can a person be righteous?

4. Describe what it would look like for you to live “not ashamed of the gospel”?

5. What is the one thing that you most want to remember and apply to your life?

6. What questions did the sermon(s) raise?

Notes:

Other resources on **Gospel Doctrine**:

Sinclair Ferguson, ***The Whole Christ***

Tim Keller, ***Prodigal God***

Dane Ortlund, ***Gentle and Lowly***

John Stott, ***The Cross of Christ***

TWO

GOSPEL CULTURE

“Gospel doctrine is the good news of God’s grace for the undeserving. Gospel culture is the shared experience of grace for the undeserving - the corporate incarnation of the good news in relationships, vibe, tone, aroma, values, priorities, etc. We have to preach gospel doctrine and practice gospel culture simultaneously. We must strive for doctrinal purity and relational beauty. Otherwise, we risk unsaying with how we behave what we claim to believe.” – Ray Ortlund

The gospel is the good news of God’s grace to us in Jesus. If the truth of Christianity is grace, then it should result in a people of grace. Paul, in Ephesians 4, says, “I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling you have received” (Ephesians 4:1). It is a matter of urgency for the apostle Paul that churches not only believe gospel doctrine, but also become a gospel culture.

Three equations help us define the relationship between gospel doctrine and gospel culture.

Gospel doctrine – Gospel culture = hypocrisy.

Christian doctrine is grace. Love for the undeserving. Therefore, together, we should be gracious to one another. Any church where there is not a culture of grace is unsaying what they claim to be. If, instead, there is a collective attitude of ungrace, characterized by self-righteousness, impatience, lack of welcome for sinners and strugglers, etc. – it is a sign that we are not who we say we are. We are not resting in the love of Jesus. We are hypocrites. Some form of moralism has snuck in the back door. We have to stop and ask, are we really preaching, teaching, and believing the gospel of grace? If so, then why it is not showing up in our lives?

A church that has gospel doctrine but no corresponding gospel culture gives off a certain vibe. It is full of people who mistake their goodness for righteousness, and then use it as a weapon to beat up others who don’t measure up to their standards. Such people may be right, but they are right the wrong way. This results in a moral intensity that is void of any playfulness or joy. Such people take themselves too seriously. And they take the sins of others more seriously than they do grace. So, they lack humility, gentleness, and patience. If the truth of the gospel is grace, and if believing is also grace (Ephesians 2:8-9) then any impatience or harshness with others who don’t believe or behave the same as you is out of place. If grace is the truth we believe, then the only option is to be gracious with the truth.

Gospel culture – Gospel doctrine = fragility.

Gospel doctrine creates and sustains gospel culture. Faith energizes love (Galatians 5:6). Without faith, love quickly becomes sentimentalism, or worse. Without faith, love is not love. It is selfishness dressed up in fancy clothes. The kind of love the Bible calls us to is supernatural. It requires more of us than we naturally have strength for. Only Christ's love can compel us to live not for ourselves (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). His love for us is the power source for our love for one another.

Gospel doctrine + Gospel culture = spiritual power.

Faithfulness to the gospel requires more than doctrinal purity. It also requires relational beauty. Gospel doctrine *and* gospel culture. When those two come together, the result is spiritual power. However, a gospel culture is harder to lay hold of than gospel doctrine.

So, let's attempt to describe a true gospel culture.

It would be a place where it is safe to be a sinner.

It would be a place where good things happen to bad people.

It would be a place where the outsider is welcome.

It would be a place where powerful humility is on display.

It would be a place of brutal honesty, even when it comes to our biggest, ugliest sins and struggles – where we walk in the light with one another.

Not shaming, posing, blaming, finger-wagging, finger-pointing or fault-finding, but rather, gracious honesty and acceptance of one another.

After all, we're all a mess.

It would be a place where confession was the rule and criticism the exception.

It would be a place of fierce encouragement and gentle correction, and never the other way around.

It would be a place where the vibe is comfort and assurance, not threat.

It would be a place where pride and gossip are treated the same as adultery and other sexual sins.

It would be a place where people compete to outdo each other in showing honor (Romans 12:10).

Listen to the sermon ***"Gospel Doctrine: Gospel Culture"*** preached by Ray Ortlund at Redeemer in April 2022. Then, answer the following questions. You can also take notes in the space below.

1. Read Galatians 5:6 and write the verse in the space below. What stands out to you as you read?

2. Briefly describe the feel of the churches you've been a part of. What words would you use as adjectives?

3. Describe a "gospel culture." What would a church with a genuine gospel culture look and "feel" like? In your own words, what would the vibe be?

4. What is the one thing that you most want to remember and apply to your life?

5. What questions did the sermon(s) raise?

Notes:

Other resources on **Gospel Culture:**

Tim Keller, ***Forgiveness***

Henri Nouwen, ***The Return of the Prodigal Son***

Ray Ortlund, ***The Gospel***

Richard Sibbes, ***A Bruised Reed***

Philip Yancey, ***What's So Amazing About Grace?***

THREE

GOSPEL RENEWAL

“Only a fraction of the present body of professing Christians are solidly appropriating (justification). Many others have a theoretical commitment to this doctrine, but in their day to day existence, they rely on their sanctification for justification, drawing their assurance of acceptance with God from their sincerity, their past experience of conversion, their recent religious performance or the relative infrequency of their conscious, willful disobedience... Much that we have interpreted as a defective sanctification is really an outgrowth of their loss of bearing with respect to justification.” – Richard Lovelace

Tim Keller wrote, “The Gospel is not the A-B-Cs of Christianity. It is the A-Z.” In other words, you don’t become a Christian by believing the gospel, and then grow through effort. You become a Christian by believing the gospel, then you grow in your faith by believing more deeply. You never get beyond the gospel. Instead, you go deeper into the gospel. Or rather, it goes deeper into you.

Every behaving problem is a believing problem. Or, as Richard Lovelace has said, every struggle in sanctification is really a problem with justification. Justification is the one-time act of God to declare us righteous in Christ. We are loved and accepted by God on the basis of his grace, not our performance. It is once-for-all. Sanctification is the process of growing into Christlikeness through repentance and faith. The Holy Spirit is making us more like Jesus. But it is ongoing. And fluctuating. Justification always comes first. The gospel is, believe and be saved. Then, you will obey God from the heart. Moralism reverses the order. It puts sanctification first. It says, believe and obey. Then, you will be saved. This was the problem with the Galatians Christians. They had distorted the gospel (cf. Galatians 1:7). They reversed the order of justification and sanctification. False teachers said, it’s not enough to believe in Jesus. You have to also obey the law. You have to be circumcised. Then you can be saved. The apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians to warn them that this was a different gospel. It was no gospel.

We are constantly losing the gospel and reverting back to works righteousness – basing on relationship with God on our sanctification rather than our justification. Paul describes this as “relying on the law” (Galatians 3:11-12).

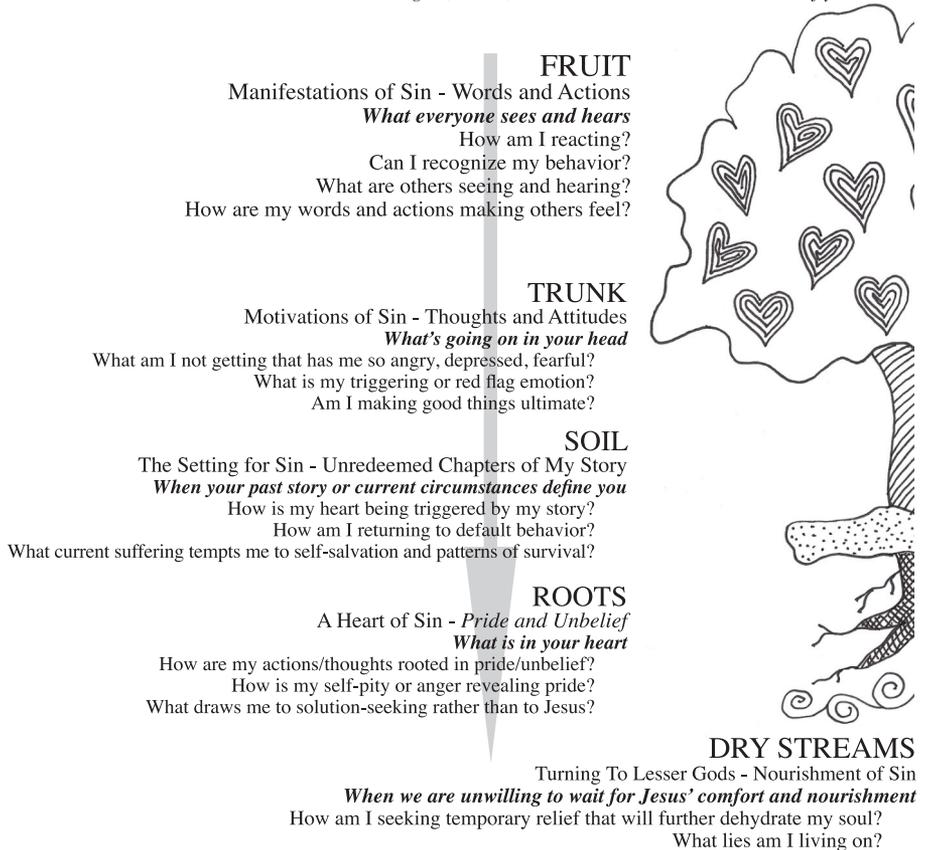
It leaves you with only one of two options. If you’re doing (relatively) well, if you’re winning in your spiritual life, then you’ll be running on the fuel of pride. Your core motivation will be a superiority-complex. On the other hand, if you’re losing spiritually, then you will be driven by fear and insecurity. Your core motivation will be an inferiority-complex. The problem is that pride and fear are the roots of all sinful behavior. So, if you try to motivate your obedience with either pride or fear, you are only strengthening the root-system of sin in your life.

Gospel fluency is the ability to root out pride and fear by keeping justification and sanctification in the right order. In whatever sin struggle you are dealing with, you look for pride and fear. Then, you dig down into those emotions until you that the wrong believing that is driving those emotions. And then, you work to replace it with right believing – by reminding yourself of the truth of the gospel.

Figure 1.3a:
From Fruit to Root Diagnostic
Taken from Parakaleo

FROM FRUIT TO ROOT: Digging Deeper Into Your Heart

If you want to know the truth about your heart and what is ruling and filling it, look at the heart's fruit: your thoughts, words, and actions. These reveal the state of your heart.



Prayer of Repentance

"I confess... [what I did], ... [how I did it], and ... [why I felt motivated to do it]."

Figure 1.3b:
From Root to Fruit Diagnostic
Taken from Parakaleo

FROM ROOT TO FRUIT: *The Outworking of Faith*

Since transformation is a work of the Holy Spirit, change and good fruit is inevitable, but not predictable. We can know that the Spirit's fruit will become evident, but we can not dictate how or when. Avoid artificially adding "good" fruit to your life; rather, allow the changed roots and trunk of your heart to bear the new fruit.



FRUIT

Manifestations of Faith - Words and Actions

What everyone sees and hears

- How am I reacting?
- Is the Spirit's fruit visible?
- Can I recognize joyful gratitude in my behavior?
- Are my new actions revealing God's power instead of my power?
- What are others seeing and hearing?
- How are my words and actions making others feel?

TRUNK

Motivations of Faith - Thoughts and Attitudes

What's going on in your head

- How are my thoughts changing about God, others, myself, my circumstances?
- How is my inner dialogue matching what God says about me?
- Am I asking the Spirit to transform me and fill me with joy?

SOIL

The Setting for Faith - Redeemed Chapters of My Story

When you see redemption and rescue in your story then and now

- How am I seeing redemption in my story?
- In what ways is God inviting me to hope?

ROOTS

A Heart of Faith - Humility and Belief

What is in your heart

- What does a heart of repentance look like?
- How am I brought back to humility?
- How can I accept responsibility for my sin?
- Do I believe God sees me clothed in righteousness?

STREAMS OF LIVING WATER

Turning Away from Lesser Gods - Nourishment of Faith

When we soak our hearts in Jesus

- How am I seeking the comfort of Jesus?
- Am I finding my soul stilled in the truth of the gospel?

Prayer of Belief

"I believe you have taken away all my sin, that you call me your beloved, and that you have clothed me in Christ's righteousness. I believe that the very power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that is in me right now. I believe; help my unbelief."

Listen to the sermon **“Gospel Renewal”** from April 30, 2023, based on John 6:28-29. Then, answer the following questions. You can also take notes in the space below.

1. Read John 6:28-29 and write the verses in the space below. What stands out to you as you read?

2. What is the work that you must do to be doing the works of God (cf. John 6:28-29)? Why is it so hard to simply believe?

3. Give one specific example of “gospel forgetfulness” in your life. How would remembering the gospel in that area of your life change you?

4. What is the one thing that you most want to remember and apply to your life?

5. What questions did the sermon(s) raise?

Notes:

Other resources on **Gospel Fluency**:

Serge Small Group Resources, ***“Gospel Identity”***

Serge Small Group Resources, ***“Gospel Growth”***

Jeff Vanderstelt, ***Gospel Fluency***

Jeff Vanderstelt, ***Gospel Fluency Handbook***

FOUR

GOSPEL PEOPLE

“There is an entire psychological substructure that, due to the fall, is a near constant manufacturing of relational leveraging, fear-stuffing, nervousness, score-keeping, neurotic controlling, anxiety-festering silliness. – Dane Ortlund

As you develop gospel fluency, it will begin to profoundly (and uniquely) shape your sense of self. You will become a **gospel person**. Your identity and behavior will be profoundly shaped by grace.

Martin Luther used a Latin phrase to describe the experience of every believer – ***simul iustus et peccator***. We are simultaneously justified and also sinful. We are completely forgiven and accepted by God by grace alone. Yet, we continue to sin on an ongoing basis. Therefore, we should be both incredibly courageous and bold in our relationship with God, **and**, at the same time, humble and soft. A gospel person is immune from developing a superiority complex. Neither do they suffer from an inferiority complex. They make no connection between their performance and their self-concept. Instead, they say, “By the grace of God I am what I am!” (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Listen to the sermon ***“Gospel People”*** from May 7, 2023, based on 1 Corinthians 4:3-5. Then, answer the following questions. You can also take notes in the space below

1. Read 1 Corinthians 4:3-5 and write the verses in the space below. What stands out to you as you read?

2. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 and write the verses in the space below. What stands out to you as you read?

3. Read 1 Corinthians 15:9-10 and write the verses in the space below. What stands out to you as you read?

4. Describe a “gospel person” using your own words.

5. What is the one thing that you most want to remember and apply to your life?

6. What questions did the sermon(s) raise?

Notes:

Other resources on **Gospel People:**

Tim Keller, ***Blessed Self-Forgetfulness***

Tim Keller, ***“Practical Grace”*** sermon series

Dane Ortlund, ***Gentle and Lowly***

Michael Reeves, ***Rejoice and Trembling***

WRAP-UP

GOSPEL CONVERSATION

Now that you have, on your own, interacted with some of the ideas that have shaped Redeemer's gospel focus, you should attend the GOSPEL Conversation – a 1-hr group discussion on how Redeemer's mission, vision, and strategies are shaped by our gospel commitments. If you are not able to attend the class, you can arrange to have a personal conversation with one of our pastors or leaders covering the same material.

To prepare for that discussion, read the story of the Prodigal Son in **Luke 15:11-32**. Then, give consideration to the following questions.

Joining Question

Are you more like the younger brother or the elder brother in Jesus' famous parable? What about your church background?

Key Question

The gospel is the "center" between irreligion/relativism and religion/moralism. Which do you think is the more dangerous "gospel thief"?

Discussion Questions

1. Tim Keller has said, "Jesus' teaching consistently attracted the irreligious while offending the Bible-believing religious people of His day. However – our churches do not have this same affect, which can only mean one thing. Our preaching and practices are not declaring the same message that Jesus did." To the degree that a church resembles Jesus – in its message and tone (i.e. culture), it will be attractive and hospitable to irreligious/immoral people and, at times, challenging for religious/moral people. Discuss this.

2. Redeemer is committed to being a place that is welcoming and safe for sinner and skeptics. The lesson of the Prodigal Son story is that God runs towards sinners. So, we want to run towards sinners. What does that look like? What are the challenges?

3. What is a gospel culture? How would you describe it?
4. When we say, “The gospel is our curriculum” – what do we mean? How do you think this might affect ministry at Redeemer?
5. Describe a personal spiritual struggle. Diagnose it as an issue of gospel forgetfulness. How would a greater faith in the gospel lead to change? (Review the Fruit to Root tool for help.)
6. The first indication of gospel fluency is **honesty – membership vow #1**. The opposite of honesty is **hiding**. How are you doing at confessing your sins and repenting? Why is it so hard? What do we do instead?
7. The second indication of gospel fluency is **resting - vow #2**. The opposite of resting is **striving**. Are you living from God’s heart or for God’s heart?
8. The third indication of gospel fluency is **holiness - vow #3**. The opposite of holiness is **spiritual apathy**.
9. What is the one thing that was most impactful to you?
10. What is the one thing area where you most need to change? How can our pastors and elders be praying for you?

Notes:



REDEEMER
WINTER HAVEN