

## *Introduction and Format*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**THE GOSPEL CHANGES EVERYTHING**

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

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*Read*

2 Corinthians 5:17-19

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*Apply*

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

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

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

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*Pray*

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

**THE GOSPEL CHANGES EVERYTHING**

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

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*Read*

Romans 8:12-17

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*Apply*

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

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

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

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*Pray*

For gratitude that you are God's child.

## Three – In Line With the Gospel

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### THE GOSPEL CHANGES EVERYTHING

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

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*Read*

Galatians 3:1-3

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*Apply*

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

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

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

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*Pray*

For eyes of faith to remember the Gospel daily.