

the *Kerygma*



NEWSLETTER OF REDEEMER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 5 SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2005

*Prayer is the
open admission
that without
Christ we can do
nothing. And
prayer is the
turning away
from ourselves to
God in the
confidence that
He will provide
the help we need.
Prayer humbles
us as needy, and
exalts God as
wealthy.*

-John Piper

MAKING PRAYER A PRIORITY BY TOM GIBBS

As we enter our fourth year of ministry in San Antonio, I am continually reminded of what has been so foundational to the progress of the Gospel in our midst—prayer. Prayer has been, but more importantly continues to be, one of the bedrock commitments of a vibrant and growing church. Such a commitment is clearly seen when we consider the early church who gathered regularly and often for prayer (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 6:2-4). So often church plants start off full of dreams that are as big as the Kingdom of God, yet those same hopes fade as lesser objectives overwhelm a God-centered vision. John Smed, church planter in Vancouver writes, “We sell our inheritance to the lowest bidder—we settle for Sunday morning Christianity! We count attendees and we count offerings. *Nickels and noses* win out. The result is pedestrian and tame. We want The Lion of Judah to roar. Instead, the number crunchers bicker. The difference can be traced to prayer. Our heartless prayers have led to gutless strategies.”

Prayer is the unseen, yet vital way we engage and enlist the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our midst. How might we make prayer more of a priority in our community groups, Bible studies, families and personal lives? Let me suggest the following:

Prayer is what we do when we realize God’s Kingdom cannot possibly be accomplished through our efforts alone.

So often in ministry what is pragmatic or “what works” drives the ministry. Because prayer is intuitively inefficient, we see it as the most un-pragmatic thing in the world. There are few things that seem more foolish than praying. Nevertheless, if we believe the Bible, prayer is the *only thing we can do* to truly acknowledge the centrality of God’s work among us. He tells us that his Kingdom does not come by our working or our might, but by his Spirit (Zech. 4:6). Prayer forces us to come to the end of our strategies and recognize that God works above, in spite of and beyond them to coordinate amazing results.

Even so, this does not give us cause to cast our strategies aside. Rather, in prayer we ask God to bless our feeble efforts. *Prayer is not the end of “means.”* It simply becomes the mechanism by which we see the Kingdom come as He blesses the seemingly foolish means of grace: preaching, Bible study, fellowship, community group, sacraments.

In today’s setting the need to do “church” more efficiently is driving the Church. We want to be “more successful”. But at what cost? Is it possible to achieve success yet lose our identity? Consider Jesus’ words in Matthew 16:26: “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?” Prayer forces us to acknowledge that God is the one who works first and foremost for his Kingdom. In reality, therefore, the choice is not between pragmatism (what works) and inefficiency (what doesn’t), but between God-centered pragmatism and man-centered pragmatism. In other words, is God central in the equation? When we don’t pray we act as though our efforts are sufficient.

Our desire is not for a mere organization to be filled in people’s hearts, but for our culture to be transformed by an organism animated by the Spirit of the Lord. For this we must pray and pray often!

Prayer is what we do when we realize none of us are equipped for the ministry at-hand.

Along with the above observation is the recognition that we do not measure up to the task. Not only is the task too large, we are incompetent for our duty. I cannot count how many times I have thought to myself, “I am so ill-equipped for the task to which I have been called.”

For this reason, Jesus tells us to pray for laborers of the harvest because the laborers are few. We often think of this prayer as the request for more laborers. Certainly it is that. However, when I consider how many laborers that are currently in the field of ministry in a place like Texas, *we have not merely a need of quantity, we have a need of quality.* In my estimation we have many laborers who are present, but who were not sent.



Continued on page 2

REDEEMER EXTENDING THE KINGDOM

MISSIONS MINUTE

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk, but in deed and in truth.

1 John 3:16-18

Peru Mission Trip, by Lori Fitch

In summarizing our trip to Peru, you could say we did just about everything. We experienced the incredible ancient Inca city of Machu Picchu, we hiked to a little village at 13,000 feet high, cooked lentil soup with the villagers, gave vaccinations, held a medical clinic, built tops for latrines, had an impromptu VBS, went sightseeing, went shopping, met many new friends, listened to the incredible testimony of a young life that God has blessed, experienced a home cooked meal of guinea pig, gave an oral hygiene lesson to a group of children, had coffee and dessert in downtown Cusco, attended a three hour church service in Spanish, conducted home visitations with the villagers, waited two or more hours in a bank line to make a deposit, and did more sightseeing and shopping (after all I am a girl!). Most of all, we laughed a lot and learned about God's plan for our lives.

Our purpose was to see how we as a church and individuals could help with the ministry and work going on in Peru. In so many ways God is a presence in the lives of those in Cusco. The people there are working and reaching out to those in need. My hopes would be that Redeemer Presbyterian Church could join the work and lives of these people and come to know them as our neighbors.



Vacation Bible School at the Guadalupe Community Center, by Gina Walker

This was an incredible week. It was an awesome time as we continued to develop relationships and do ministry on the Southwest side of town. Please be in prayer for this ministry as we long to one day see churches planted there. Here is a summary of the week:

For four days, we taught Bible lessons using the *Wordless Book*, we sang songs in Spanish, we made fun crafts, ate delicious snacks, and played outdoor games at the Guadalupe Community Center. Thirty to thirty five children joined us each morning. We started at 9 am and finished the lessons by 11 am. We divided the children into three groups by age and volunteers had the opportunity to get to know the children in their group. We believe this week was filled with wonderful ministry opportunities. We taught the children and the children taught us. We wrapped up the week on Thursday evening by singing with the children and their parents.

Elvia, who works at the Community Center, exclaimed, "It's been awesome. You don't know how great this has been for these kids. They have loved it! Loved it! Loved it!" Elvia also said that they all want us to come back next year.



MAKING PRAYER A PRIORITY (CONTINUED)

Prayer becomes a primary way by which *Jesus equips us to be truly sent, not merely present, in ministry*. Prayer makes us effective. How many of us have witnessed average or below-average gifts produce unbelievable fruits? Consider the miracle of the five loaves and two fish. Surely Jesus is challenging us to become laborers who are not merely present in ministry, but who truly reap a harvest in spite of our below-average competencies. For this we must pray and pray often!

Prayer is what we do when we realize the struggle in our hearts between the purposes shaped by our sinful desires and the purposes of the Kingdom.

Listening to and pondering God's Kingdom values—loving the poor, dealing ruthlessly with sin, sacrificing personal wealth or personal time, etc.—forces me to confront my sinful desires. *Confessing prayer* is the response to a true encounter with Jesus and what he says is most important. If confession of sin is not a regular part

of my prayer life then most likely I will be using my prayer life as a means to satiate my sinful appetites. In other words, my prayer life will not be that much different than a Santa Claus wish list.

As John Piper writes, "We have taken a wartime walkie-talkie and tried to turn it into a civilian intercom to call the servants for another cushion in the den...prayer is a walkie-talkie for warfare, not a domestic intercom for increasing our conveniences." Confession is the form our prayer takes when we realize we have not been captured by what most concerns the heart of God. For this we must confess our sins and do so often!

Prayer is what we do when we realize that circumstances are beyond our control and we must entrust ourselves to the Providence of our all-powerful and good Father.

Prayer is also the response to a world that is broken around us. Circumstances, people and both the past and the future all whirl around us. The world in

which we live is far beyond our control. Cancer, illness, poverty, racism, parents, children, unexpected death, etc. all force us to pray so that we do not become anxious and beset with our powerlessness and discouraged by the horrific character of the world.

It is not an accident that the Lord teaches us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," and "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." *Such petitions remind us that God is truly concerned with our temporal welfare and not just an abstract ideal of the Kingdom*. The Kingdom encompasses the concrete realities of our broken lives. In other words, God loves us and wants us protected from that which ultimately harms. Moreover, he is both capable and willing. God is both powerful and good. Such confidence in our God builds confidence in our prayers!

Let us, therefore, as we enter this fall of ministry be emboldened to pray fervently and often!

EN MI CORAZON: BELIZE MISSION TRIP BY AMY KETCHAM

Our trip to Belize was amazing! I'll begin with a general layout of the week's activities. We flew into Belize City on Saturday afternoon and then enjoyed a very breezy (who needs A/C when you have windows?) two-hour bus ride to San Narciso. There we were immediately greeted by a group of excited children who were ready to play with the newly-arrived Gringos. After lunch on Sunday, we toured Corozal and then headed back to the village where we played with the kids (a recurrent theme for the week) and then got ready for the worship service held at six in the evening. That



night, we went to bed relatively early in preparation for the week's work. At eight o'clock Monday morning, we headed to the work site which was a new building being added to

Cornerstone High School. Our duties included painting the completed walls and ceilings and helping out with the rather strenuous clean-up tasks. We worked on the site from eight to one, Monday through Thursday, and then we hosted the children's VBS starting at three in the afternoon.

My time spent in Belize pushed me beyond my relational comfort zone. That is, I had to take into account the needs and desires of (at least) eight other individuals when thinking about what activities would fill my day. Of course, the first requirement of adopting this more other-centered perspective was to abandon the concept of "my day" and "my time." Admittedly, it was the kids who turned out for VBS who served as the greatest role models in demonstrating a way of life that placed community needs over selfish desires. They relied on one another for protection, care and entertainment. As a result, there was little arguing and much cooperation. Yes, we were officially charged with instructing these children during VBS, but I believe we were the ones receiving lessons in what it means to love your neighbor.

In the course of spending a week with fellow team members, you can no longer avoid being drawn into each other's struggles.



Regardless of the nature of the shared struggle, each one served to illustrate that no one is isolated in his or her sin. We all suffer the effects of being broken creatures. And, yes, while this realization highlights the importance of supporting and loving one another, it ultimately reveals the necessity of a Savior. We went on a mission to Belize to serve our fellow brethren, but we were enabled to do this only by the completed work of Christ. He alone has satisfied our every need so that we are freed to look outward and love our broken neighbor. "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." (1 John 4:10-11).

REDEEMER IN THE COUNTRY, 2005 BY BRANDI RICKELS

At the beginning of the summer, Tom began dropping less-than-subtle hints around the church office. Harriet knew that he was hoping that she and Dan would again open their ranch for what has become the signature summer event for our church. Despite a few intermittent showers, the third annual Redeemer in the Country offered no disappointments and certainly exceeded everyone's expectations.



Over 120 friends and families made their way out to the PV Ranch that Sunday afternoon for swimming, games, a hay ride, and of course, BBQ! Under the dappled shade of a majestic cypress tree, we thanked the Lord for His provision and His presence that day:

For comfortable porches that provided shelter, and plastic table cloths that shed the rain,
For helping hands of friends and parents,

and watchful eyes over bold, hungry cats,

For friendly competition on the sports field and "refreshing" waters beckoning brave swimmers,

For rest and relaxation, warm smiles and open hearts,

For the sheer beauty of the hill country.

As everyone packed up to head home that evening, the sunset bathed the trees with its amber rays. It was a most blessed day.



PRESBYTERIAN REDEEMER

3737 Broadway, Suite 285
San Antonio, TX 78209
Phone: 210-930-4480 Fax: 210-930-4481
www.redeemersa.org


Join us
at our worship
location,
The McAllister
Fine Art Center
on Sundays
at 9:30 a.m.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Sept. 6 | Newcomer's Dessert |
| Sept. 15 | Men's Fellowship Night |
| Sept. 17 | Women's Autumn Grace |
| Oct. 14- 15 | Men's Retreat |
| Oct. 20 | Men's Fellowship Night |
| Oct. 30 | Fall Festival |
| Nov. 5 | Women's Retreat |
| Nov. 11-12 | Christianity and
Contemporary Culture
Conference |

MAP



 Sunday Morning Worship Services are held
at the McAllister Fine Arts Center