

START

REDEMPTION CHURCH

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Who We are	7
Who You are	20
How We Live	30
How We Change Our World	39

INTRODUCTION

Growth Track is an essential part of your spiritual growth. Comprised of four short classes, Growth Track is the journey to get connected and discover:

Week 1: Who we are as a church

***First Sunday of every month**

Week 2: Who you are as a believer

***Second Sunday of every month**

Week 3: How we live as believers

***Third Sunday of every month**

Week 4: How we change our world

***Fourth Sunday of every month**

Growth Track sessions rotate every four weeks and you can join any time.

OUR STORY

Pastor Jason and Danielle moved to Schenectady, NY in 2010 with a desire to see God move in the Northeast and a dream to plant a life-giving church. With the help of the CityReach Network, they planted CityReach Church Schenectady in March of 2015. The church began to grow, and by March of 2018 the church made the step to become autonomous and renamed itself Redemption Church. Regardless of name, the church's mission remains the same: to bring redemption through Jesus to everyone, every day, every where.

Jason and Danielle are known for their passion for people, absolute love of Jesus, and desire for all to know Christ's redemption in their lives. They value diversity and culture and love to enable God's people to influence their world. God has brought a phenomenal team to share in this journey with them that truly reflect those values.

The Coopers have been married for fourteen years and have three children, Isabella, Carolina, and Mercede.

WEEK ONE: WHO WE ARE

OUR MISSION AND METHOD

"My life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God."

—Acts 20:24 (NLT)

OUR MISSION: WHAT WE DO

We have a simple mission here at Redemption Church: **We exist to bring redemption through Jesus to everyone, every day, everywhere.**

What is the “redemption through Jesus”?

Redemption can be defined as “to buy back” or “to make payment and absolve a debt.” The redemption Jesus brings is just that. He made a way to buy us back and brought the gospel for everyone, everywhere. So, what is the gospel? The gospel is good news, but what is the news and what makes it good? Much of what is sold as “the gospel” is an inferior substitute for the real thing. Here at Redemption Church, we don’t believe in cheap knockoffs! There is an easy way to distinguish the authentic from the counterfeit. The true gospel is 100 percent good news. If the gospel you’ve bought into makes you feel insecure, anxious, guilty, and condemned, then it’s no good.

The original gospel signaled a great joy for all people. It was, and remains, an announcement about a Man—Jesus—who accomplished two significant acts that secured your eternal freedom:

1. Jesus Died For You

In the greatest demonstration of love the world has ever seen, Jesus gave His life for us. We had chosen independence from God and reaped the whirlwind. But God loved us so much that He sent His Son to ransom us from the power of sin and death. The Son of God became a son of man and took the punishment that brought us peace. He was rejected that we might be accepted; wounded that we might be healed; cursed that we might be blessed. On the cross He carried our sin and gave us His righteousness. Through Him we have been reconciled to God and our sins are no longer held against us. He brought redemption. In the grip of death Jesus cried, “It is finished.” His rescue mission was complete and Jesus committed His spirit into the hands of His Father and died for you.

2. Jesus lives for you.

The ransom was paid in full, Jesus rose triumphant from the dead. He now sits at the Father’s right hand, a perfect High Priest, who lives to speak for us. If you believe that Jesus has saved you, then believe that He will keep you and He will never change His mind. He is the Author and Perfecter of our faith and His blood has obtained your eternal redemption. Jesus is not alone in all this. Your heavenly Father loves you with an everlasting love and saving you was His plan all along. In order that we might have a firm and secure hope to cling to, God the Father has sworn a covenant of peace with the Son of Man and neither will ever break it. He has also given us His mighty Spirit – the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead –as a deposit guaranteeing all that He has promised. Through our representative, Jesus, and as an expression of His enduring love, our heavenly Father has joined Himself to us in perfect union, promising never to leave nor

forsake us. We stand secure, not on our feeble promises to Him, but on His unconditional and unbreakable promises to us. Redemption is Jesus - the gospel is Jesus and He's the world's greatest gift. If you've never received His free gift of grace, you can do so now.

OUR METHOD: HOW WE DO IT

Our mission is “what we do.” Our method is “how we do it.” The method of Redemption Church can be boiled down to these three things:

REACHING UP [LOVING GOD]

This is our upward focus through worship.

REACHING IN [SERVING OTHERS]

This is our internal focus to bless others through serving and giving.

REACHING OUT [SHARING JESUS]

This is our outward focus locally, nationally, and internationally.

Let’s talk about it...

1. REACHING UP – Loving God

One time a lawyer came to Jesus and asked Him, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” Note the focus of the man’s question here. He was asking about the Law. Jesus answered his question, saying,

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.”
(Matthew 22:37–38, NIV)

In response to the man’s question about the greatest law, Jesus answered that it’s to love God. Sounds good on the surface but doesn’t work in real life. Why?

Simple. By our own power, we can’t love God the way that command demands. God knew this, of course, which is one of the reasons He gave the commandment. Just try commanding your children to love each other more. It might be right and a good thing to want, but commanding people to love just doesn’t work. Commanding people who don’t already possess love to love does nothing but expose their inability.

Remember, Jesus was quoting the Law of Moses to people who were under the Law. Pushing the idea that we need to love God more is right in line with the Law. Although it sounds good on the surface, it’s actually legalistic teaching. It’s an ironic fact that when a person focuses on the demand to love God, the whole thing actually backfires and causes him to become painfully aware of how much he lacks in the area of loving God.

That’s the weakness of laws. They’re true and right about what we ought to do—but there’s no power in them to enable us to do!

Romans 5:20 The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more"

Romans 7:5–8 For when we were in the realm of the flesh,[a] the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. 6 But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.7 What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." [b]8 But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead.

So what's the answer? It's **1 John 4:19: "We love because he first loved us first."** It isn't possible to love God as we want to until we understand how much He loves us. That is redemptive love. Then, and only then, we'll reach up, finding love for God swelling up within our hearts.

Haven't you found this to be true in your own life? When you've focused on loving Him more, did you feel like you were succeeding? Or did you find yourself literally praying for help to love Him more? Praying, "Lord, help me to love you more" is evidence that you felt you were falling short in that area.

The key to reaching up and loving God is to focus on how much He loves us, not on how much we love Him at any given moment in life.

This is why Paul mentions so often in his letters his desire that those to whom he wrote would gain the spiritual understanding of God's love for them. I suggest you pray the same thing for yourself as you can see in this great passage:

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:14–19, ESV)

As you grow in your understanding of the great love that God has for you – how long, how wide, how deep, and how high it really is – you'll discover a motivation within you. In response to His love, you'll grow and flourish. You'll find yourself reaching up, loving God more and more (and even reaching in, loving everybody else around you more and more too).

The greatest success Redemption Church can ever have is to lead people to an awareness of the love of God, which will then lead them to love God the way He ought to be. The greatest failure Redemption Church can have is to try to lead people to love God without an awareness of how loved they truly are. We'll never be able to reach up if we don't understand that God's already reached down. Someone has said it like this: "We are objects of love before we are subjects who love."

That leads to the second part of our method, which is...

2. REACHING IN – Serving Others

Jesus made some absolutely incredible statements about some absolutely incredible subjects that were staggering to the imagination. He said things no one else had ever said. For example, "It's more blessed to give than to receive," "Love your enemies," and "Pray for those who hurt you."

In Matthew 20, Jesus makes a statement that probably makes the top three of the most mind-blowing statements He ever made. This is the statement:

"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve."
(Matthew 20:28, NIV)

At Redemption Church, we must serve as Christ served, because Christ is living His life in and through us. Our heart is His heart, our hands are His hands, and our feet are His feet.

This next statement is crucial.

No church will ever rise above these two things:

- (1) Leadership**
- (2) Servanthood**

All the leadership in the world is useless if no one is willing to serve. You can have the greatest general in the world, but he's useless if no one's willing to fight. You can have the greatest coach in the world, but he's useless if no one's willing to play. A restaurant can have the greatest food in the world, but if no one's willing to serve it's going out of business.

At Redemption Church, what we need and aim to develop is an army of believers who don't always have to be served but are willing to serve. We all have different personalities, different interests, different passions, different skills, different gifts, and different abilities. There's a reason for that. God made you the way you are, so you can do what He wants you to do. He wants to take who you are, your passions, your gifts, your skills, and your abilities and put them to work in the service of the church and in the world.

I want you to ask yourself this question right now and think about it over the next few weeks. "Do you come here just to be served or to serve?"

Then, the last step..

3. REACHING OUT – Sharing Jesus

"Jesus . . . told his disciples, 'I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:18-20, NLT)

Jesus made it very plain that believers are to go and make disciples by declaring and demonstrating the gospel. There's a reason for that. Do you know what God cares about more than anything else in this world? People! God cares about people who don't know Him and don't love Him and don't serve Him and don't follow Him. God wants to use His believers to introduce the world to Him.

The easiest, most effective and efficient way of doing this is to simply share how the gospel has transformed your life where you live, work, and play.

In Luke 8, there's the story of a man that Jesus healed of a serious disease. After Jesus healed him, he wanted to travel with Jesus and spend time with him. Listen to what Jesus said to this man:

"Go back home and tell people how much God has done for you. So the man went all over town telling them his story of how much Jesus had done for him." (Luke 8:39, CEV)

Beginning right where you live, in your neighborhood, in your community, in your office, or at the coffee shop, God wants us out there sharing Jesus. If we really believe the gospel redeems, we can't help but share it!

Everyone who has ever become a follower of Christ has a story to tell. You have a story of how you went from being a non-believer to believer. Our church should teach you and train you and equip you and motivate you on how to share that story.

Here are the things to keep in mind. First of all, we must realize **the church isn't about programs. It's about a process.** The usual way of "doing church" is to see how many programs you can stack on top of each other and see how many times you can get people to come back to the church to be a part of those programs. The New Testament says the church should be all about a process; a process of making disciples. A process of leading people to Love God, Serve others, and Share Jesus.

That leads to a second application. **The effectiveness of a church is measured horizontally, not vertically.** Let me tell you what I mean by that. It's usual for a church to measure effectiveness by how many times we could get people to come back to the church. We even measure maturity this way. We have the idea that if a person comes to church Saturday night, Sunday morning, Wednesday night, and attends a small group, they must be mature. May I let you in on a little secret? Some of the meanest people I've ever pastored never missed a service!

The true way you measure the effectiveness of a church is the answer to this question: "How are we doing in moving people along from Loving God to Serving Others to Sharing their Story?"

OUR STRUCTURE

"For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. ... Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way."

–1 Corinthians 14:33, 40 (NIV)

REDEMPTION CHURCH STRUCTURE

Believers who invest their hearts, time, families, and finances in the building of a local church deserve to have confidence in church leadership. People are looking for leaders who conduct themselves with integrity and respect when making decisions that affect their lives.

Our structure includes is summed up this way:

Redemption Church is elder governed, senior pastor led, staff & volunteer run, and congregation owned.

1. SENIOR PASTOR LED & STAFF/VOLUNTEER RUN

The number one responsibility of the senior pastor is to receive, communicate and successfully implement God's vision for the church. Although the vision is carried and ultimately implemented through a broad base of ministry leaders both volunteer and vocational, it is the Senior Pastor who serves as the primary carrier of the vision to motivate and lead people to participate.

2. PROTECTION BY THE NY MINISTRY NETWORK

The NY Ministry Network is a regional arm of the National office of the Assemblies of God. They provide oversight, accountability, and protection to the local church and its ministers.

3. GOVERNED BY ELDERS (Spiritual & Financial Oversight)

The Elders are faithful leaders who are vetted and qualified to provide spiritual protection to Redemption Church. The elders establish the emphasis and timing for implementation of major ministry initiatives and they providing accountable covering for the major decisions related to the vision. They may be called upon to help in key matters relating to the church or Senior Pastor, as requested.

OUR HOPE FOR YOU

THE NEXT STEPS

1. Become a partner of Redemption Church by completing the Start Track.
2. Participate in an Equip Class or Small Group.
3. Serve on the Dream Team.

REDEMPTION CHURCH PARTNERSHIP COMMITMENT

I commit myself to the following:

1. I will protect the unity of my church:

By acting in love toward other members.
By refusing to gossip.
By following the leaders.

"So let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony, and on the growth of one another's character." (Romans 14:19, Ph)

"Live in complete harmony with each other - each with the attitude of Christ toward the other." (Romans 15:5, TLB)

"Have a sincere love for other believers, love one another earnestly with all your heart." (1 Peter 1:22, GNT)

"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs." (Ephesians 4:29, NIV)

"Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you." (Hebrews 13:17, NIV)

2. I will share the responsibility of my church:

By praying for its growth.
By inviting people to attend.
By warmly welcoming those who visit.

"To the church...we always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers." 1 Thessalonians 1:1-2

"Go out into the country...and urge anyone you find to come, so that the house will be full." Luke 14:23 (TLB)

"So warmly welcome each other into the church, just as Christ has warmly welcomed you; then God will be glorified." Romans 15:7 (TLB)

3. I will serve the ministry of my church:

By discovering my gifts and talents.

By being equipped to serve by my pastors.

By developing the heart of a son.

"Serve one another with the particular gifts God has given each of you." (1 Peter 4:10, PH)

"So Christ himself gave ... the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." (Ephesians 4:11-12, NIV)

"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus...by taking on the very nature of a servant."
(Philippians 2:4-5, 7, NIV 1984)

4. I will support the testimony of my church:

By attending church faithfully.

By living the Christ life.

By giving regularly.

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (Acts 2:42, NIV)

"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another." (Hebrews 10:25, NIV)

"But whatever happens, make sure that your everyday life is worthy of the Gospel of Christ." (Philippians 1:27, PH)

"On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made." (1 Corinthians 16:2, TLB)

Values We Live By At Redemption Church

1. The Bible

The Bible is the way the Lord tells us about Himself and how He wants us to live. We grow one step closer to Jesus everyday by becoming who He tells us to be in His word. (2 Tim. 3:16, NIV)

2. The Mission

We will live for the bigger picture, taking action in communities locally and globally. (Matt. 28:19, NLT)

3. Local Church

We will invest our lives to build the local church. The church is a big deal to God and a big deal to us. (Matt. 16:16-18, NLT; Heb. 10:24-25, NIV; 1 Cor. 12:19, MSG)

4. Culturally Distinct

We are radically diverse in age, ethnicity and background. Our individual uniquenesses make us stronger together through Jesus Christ first. (Gal. 3:28, NIV)

5. Generosity

We will lead the way with irrational generosity. We truly believe it is more blessed to give than receive. (2 Cor. 9:7-8, NLT)

6. Community Relationships

The church isn't a building; it's a community. We will find our significance through our relationships. (Acts 2:42-47, NIV)

7. Creativity

If we are going to live out our mission, we must unleash the creative potential God has placed in us. (Rom. 12:6, NIV)

WEEK ONE: WHO WE ARE

1. Our Mission: What We Do

We exist to bring _____ through _____ to everyone, every day, everywhere.

2. Redemption Church is based upon giving to modern man the redemptive message of the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. What is this good news?

As God's only Son, Jesus obeyed His Father and fulfilled the Old Testament law so that He could accomplish two significant acts to secure your eternal freedom:

1. Jesus _____ for you.
2. Jesus _____ for you.

3. Our Method: How We Do It:

The method of Redemption can be boiled down to these three things:

- a. Reaching _____ (Loving God)
- b. Reaching _____ (Serving Others)
- c. Reaching _____ (Sharing Jesus)

4. Reaching Up: Loving God

5. Reaching In: Serving Others

6. Reaching Out: Sharing Jesus

7. Redemption Church Structure

Senior Pastor _____ Staff & Volunteer _____
Congregation _____
Elder _____

8. Redemption Church Partnership Commitment

I will protect the _____ of my church
I will share the _____ of my church
I will serve the _____ of my church
I will support the _____ of my church

9. Values We Live By at Redemption Church:

WEEK TWO: WHO YOU ARE

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.
—2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

YOUR NEW IDENTITY

Loving. Righteous. Reigning.

These are the kind of words that God uses to describe Himself. But what about the words God uses to describe you? Do you know who you are?

Why do we struggle to believe God when He calls us deeply loved, totally righteous, and destined to reign? How do we reconcile God's identity with our own?

In week two of Growth Track you will discover how to reimagine yourself in the image of God in Christ.

Why is this so important? You must first know who you are before you can understand how we live, which is what week three of Growth Track will cover.

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

Let's break this verse down. Here's the first half:

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us."

Jesus BECAME your sin at the cross. He didn't just remove your sin; He BECAME your sin! When you are looking at the cross, you are seeing Jesus AS you. Every lie, every dirty thought, every bad attitude, every bad word, and bad deed you ever did – He became it. And after BECOMING your sin, He then died in your place.

Jesus died in your place, paying the price for all your sin and shame He took the punishment that was meant for you.

Think about it: If Jesus took the punishment for you, there's NO punishment left for you – EVER! Jesus took it. If Jesus became your sin, God isn't going to give you a beat down for your sin, because Jesus took your beat down. Now, God can only be proud of you.

He BECAME your sin. Your price has been totally paid forever. That is the good news of grace at work in your life and that's the message we're committed to. But the verse isn't done yet; it gets even better.

The second part of 2 Corinthians 5:21 "...so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Do you see it?

Jesus became your sin in the first part of the verse but YOU become the righteousness of God in the second part. A divine exchange took place at the cross. Jesus became sin; you become righteous.

The word righteous is a big word that we don't use much anymore, so let me define it for you... and you will hear it a lot at Redemption Church.

Righteous means not guilty, entirely pleasing to God.

At the cross, that is what YOU became! You became not guilty, entirely pleasing to God! Say that out loud every day!

I AM NOT GUILTY. I AM ENTIRELY PLEASING TO GOD!

That's what God did for you at the cross. Think of it! When God looks at you, He's totally pleased with you! You make God happy! He's smiling at you! He's proud of you! You're a masterpiece to Him! His face is turned toward you. You're the apple of His eye.

Now I know this may sound crazy to some of you, because you know how imperfect you are, so let me explain how this works.

1. At the cross, Jesus took your garbage bag of mistakes – past, present, and future!

You and I have walked through life carrying all our trash. We've hauled with us our mistakes, regrets, sins—and we all have them. At the cross, Jesus took your junk, and out of love, took it away from you so you no longer have to carry it, see it, or feel shame about it.

“He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross.”
(1 Peter 2:24, NLT)

I love the word personally. He didn't theoretically carry away your sins. He personally carried your sins. He thought about you, your garbage, regrets, guilt, and sins at the cross. And He said, “son/daughter, let me free you from that stuff. I'll personally take away all your sins.”

That's your part of the gift exchange at the cross. You gave Jesus all your sins. But at the cross He also gave you a gift.

2. At the cross, Jesus gave you His perfect righteousness.

Think of it like this: Jesus was perfect. He did everything right. He healed people, forgave people, loved people, and sacrificed for people. This earned God's medal of righteousness. Like an Olympic athlete, Jesus won a gold medal in righteousness. Then, at the cross, He put you on the winner's podium and gave the medal to you.

He gave you the credit for all His good works. You got credit for His healings, His forgiveness, His love, and His sacrifices. You were given Jesus's medal of righteousness as a gift.

Let's take a look at what Scripture says,

"For if, by the trespass of the one man [Adam], death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness [entirely pleasing to God] reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!"
(Romans 5:17, NIV)

Notice He gave you righteousness as a gift! You can't earn it or deserve it. He gave you a medal of righteousness.

"For just as through the disobedience of the one man [Adam] the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man [Christ] the many will be made righteous." (Romans 5:19, NIV)

Through the obedience of Jesus, you were made entirely pleasing to God!

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God [entirely pleasing to God]."
(2 Corinthians 5:21, NIV)

You didn't become just any righteousness, but God's righteousness! He gave you His personal righteousness! When God says, "Hey! Where'd I put my medal of righteousness? I misplaced it!" He looks at you, sees you wearing it, and says, "Oh, yeah, there's my righteousness! You're my righteousness!"

When God says, "I am righteous," He looks at you as proof!

Most believers think God forgave them and gave them righteousness, but then they put the medal in the closet and go back to their own self-effort and try to earn it. That's called works-righteousness which leads to guilt, spiritual burnout, fear, performance anxiety, and depression. Don't put God's gift of righteousness on the shelf and go out and try to be good! You're already gooder (in your born-again spirit) than you'll ever achieve in a million years of trying! You are, in God's eyes, as good as Jesus.

"In this world we are like Jesus." (1 John 4:17, NIV)

God's righteousness was given to you as a gift at the cross! Here's what you may ask, "So, what do I do now?" It's real simple! You walk in it! And that's what Growth Track is about at Redemption Church—teaching you how to walk in it. The Apostle Paul spoke about this in Galatians 3 and Philippians 3.

“Oh, foolish Galatians! Who has cast an evil spell on you? For the meaning of Jesus Christ’s death was made as clear to you as if you had seen a picture of his death on the cross. Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law of Moses? Of course not! You received the Spirit because you believed the message you heard about Christ. How foolish can you be? After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?” (Galatians 3:1–3, NLT)

Being saved from a life of sin and death was entirely up to God, but then you go live your life like righteousness is entirely up to us. No! It’s not by our human effort; it’s His effort that makes us righteous!

“Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved. For we who worship by the Spirit of God are the ones who are truly circumcised. We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort.” (Philippians 3:2–3, NLT)

It’s about what Christ has already done, not about what we do! Don’t put confidence in your own human effort.

The question we often get is, “Why does God’s righteousness matter so much?”

That’s a good question. Let me tell you why:

1. When you believe you have God’s righteousness, you have power over your sin.

Some people hear all this and think: Well, if I’m totally forgiven and totally righteous, I can just go do what I want! That’s crazy thinking! Do you really want to go back to your old life of dysfunction? Just because there’s no condemnation from God doesn’t mean that it’s worth going back to that old life! God may not punish you, but your sin will. Do you really want to go back to sleeping around, drinking too much, and living with your bitterness and anger? Do you really want to go back to that? Of course not!

God’s gift of righteousness doesn’t give you permission to go out and sin; it gives you power over your sin. You have God’s righteousness in you. This means you have all of Christ’s power to do the right thing. Before you were a Christian, you were incapable of being good. Now, because of Christ’s righteousness, you have all the power you need to do right.

You’re not the guy you used to be; you have God’s righteousness! You’re not that girl anymore; you have God’s righteousness! You don’t have to go back to that sin. You don’t have to go back to that struggle. You’ve been empowered by God’s righteousness to do right!

“For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law but under grace.” (Romans 6:14, NKJV)

Before Christ, sin dominated and ruled over you. Now that you’re in Christ, sin cannot rule over you. Believe it! You dominate over sin. It cannot rule you, beat you, or control you! You have dominion because of His righteousness! You’re destined to reign in this life!

2. When you believe you have God’s righteousness, you get off the emotional seesaw of guilt and happiness.

Most Christians feel happy when they do something good, and bad when they do something bad. Then happy again because they did something good, then bad all over again. The cycle never ends!

It’s an emotional seesaw of second-guessing themselves and feeling guilty based on their own self-effort. They feel that way because they’re living a life based on the law, and the law, though good, brings nothing but condemnation.

“If the ministry that brought condemnation [law] was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness [grace]!” (2 Corinthians 3:9, NIV)

Notice, the ministry of the law is good. If you’re unrighteous, it can be helpful to be shown your error, but over time you need a better way. However, the ministry that brings righteousness is more glorious! That ministry is grace.

“So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.” (Galatians 3:24, NIV)

Once you know you’re the righteousness of God, you’ll get off the seesaw of guilt and become stable. You’ll no longer feel condemned and guilty and you can walk in joy and confidence. You can walk in hope and happiness knowing no matter what, God is pleased with you!

Don’t you want off that crazy seesaw of self-effort? Aren’t you tired of always trying but never achieving? Stop trying! Rest in His achievement! You have the medal of righteousness.

3. When you believe you have God’s righteousness, you know God welcomes you into His presence.

When you try to achieve righteousness, you never really know how God feels about you, whether He wants to see you or not. Whether He wants to hear from you or not. Whether He likes you or not. But when you receive righteousness, you can be confident that He just adores you!

Many believe in the swivel chair God. He's turned toward you one minute and away from you the next. If you buy into the lie that God sits in a swivel chair, ready to rotate his face away from you when you sin, then you proclaim a God of conditional love and conditional access into His presence. But this is to ignore the work of Jesus.

"As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake.." (Psalm 17:15, NASB)

I know that because I have God's medal of righteousness, God's favor is always facing me. He's always listening to my prayers. He's always paying attention. He's always watching over me. He's always there to help. Why? I have His medal.

I always see His face! Do you believe this truth? Just stop trying to achieve and start resting in the gift of His undivided attention any given moment!

4. When you believe you have God's righteousness, you will see the goodness, favor, and blessings of the Lord.

Why are you deeply loved? You're God's righteousness.
Why are you highly favored? You're God's righteousness.
Why are you greatly blessed? You're God's righteousness.
Why will God always be good to you? Because you're entirely pleasing to Him!

"I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread." (Psalm 37:25, NIV)

Notice it will never happen; the righteous won't be forsaken. Their kids won't be destitute on the streets! God's medal of righteousness guarantees us the blessing!

It's our ticket to all the riches of heaven. It's our pass to the promises of God. You'll see ONLY goodness, favor, and blessings from your God because of the ticket of righteousness.

This is the teaching of righteousness you need to hear if you're going to reign in life. Now as soon as I say this, some of you are thinking, "What am I supposed to do? I get it. I'm God's righteousness, but what am I supposed to DO?"

The answer is simple: BELIEVE. Just believe the gospel.

"Jesus answered, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.'" (John 6:29, NIV)

Your work is simply to believe. Just trust that He made you righteous. Just believe the good news!

Do you know who you are? And do you believe it?

Next week, we'll unpack the behaviors that follow your new identity and discuss how we live-out the gospel as believers.

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17, NKJV).

Have you really thought about what it means to be new? You are not merely improved, modified, tweaked, reconditioned, reupholstered, or rebranded. You are wholly new. Indeed, a new creature, something that you never were before. Now that you're new, do you know who you are?

Below are fifty things you need to know about your new God-given identity. Read these words out loud, with conviction, and I guarantee you it will leave you feeling mightily encouraged... and new!

I Am

I am a saint, a trophy of Christ's victory.

I am born again of imperishable seed.

I am a new creation, complete in Christ and perfect forever.

I am a child of God, the apple of my Father's eye.

I am one with the Lord and the temple of the Holy Spirit.

I am eternally redeemed and completely forgiven.

I am seated with Christ in heavenly realms.

I am summoned by name and I am His.

I am dead to sin and alive to God.

I am free from guilt and condemnation.

I am righteous, holy, and blameless!

I am healed and I am strong in the Lord.

I am hidden in Christ and eternally secure.

I am loved with an everlasting love and I am highly favored.

I am my Beloved's and He is mine.

I am the head and not the tail.

I am blessed with every spiritual blessing and I am a joint heir with Christ.

I am a competent minister of the new covenant.

I am bona fide and qualified, chosen and anointed.

I am His royal ambassador, a missionary to the world.

I am a stranger on earth, a citizen of a city whose maker is God.

I am not looking back but I am pressing on to know Him more.

I am trusting that He will finish in me that which He started.

I am a king and a priest; a carrier of the Lord's authority.
I am a healer of the sick and a demon's worst nightmare.
I am king o' the world because His victory is mine!

I am as bold as a lion and more than a conqueror.
I am a towering testimony of the Spirit's power.

I am the salt of the earth and the light of the world.
I am the sweet smell of Jesus to those who are perishing.

I am a tree planted by the water, and I am a fruitful branch.
I am the disciple whom Jesus loves.

And by the grace of God I am what I am.

—
Sources:

I am a saint (Rom. 1:7; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Jude 1:3); a trophy of Christ's victory (2 Cor. 2:14, AMP); born again (1 Pet. 1:23); a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17); complete in Christ (Col. 2:10); and perfect forever (Heb. 10:14); a child of God (1 John 3:1); the apple of my Father's eye (Ps. 17:8); one with the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17); and the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19); eternally redeemed (Heb. 9:12); and completely forgiven (Col. 2:13); seated with Christ in heavenly realms (Eph. 2:6); summoned by name and His (Isa. 43:1; 2 Cor. 1:22); dead to sin and alive to God (Rom. 6:11); free from guilt and condemnation (Heb. 10:22; Rom. 8:1); righteous (2 Cor. 5:21); holy and blameless! (Eph. 1:4); healed (1 Pet. 2:24); and strong in the Lord (Eph. 6:10); hidden in Christ (Col. 3:3); and eternally secure (Heb. 6:19); loved with an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3); highly favored (Eph. 1:6 charitoo); my Beloved's and He is mine (Song of Sol. 6:3); the head and not the tail (Deut. 28:13); blessed with every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3); and a joint heir with Christ (Rom. 8:17); a competent minister of the new covenant (2 Cor. 3:6); bona fide and qualified (Col. 1:12); chosen (John 15:8; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; 1 Pet. 2:9); and anointed (1 John 2:27); His royal ambassador (2 Cor. 5:20); a missionary to the world (Matt. 28:19); a stranger on earth (Heb. 11:13); a citizen of a city whose maker is God (Heb. 11:10,16; 12:22); pressing on to know Him more (Phil. 3:14); He will finish what He started (Heb. 12:2; Jude 1:24; 2 Cor. 9:8); a king and a priest (Rev. 1:6); a carrier of the Lord's authority (Luke 10:19); a healer of the sick (Mark 16:18); and a demon's worst nightmare (Matt. 10:8); king o' the world (1 John 5:4); because His victory is mine (1 Cor. 15:57); as bold as a lion (Prov. 28:1); and more than a conqueror (Rom. 8:37); a testimony of the Spirit's power (1 Cor. 2:4; 12:7; 2 Cor. 1:9); the salt (Matt. 5:13); and light of the world (Matt. 5:14); the sweet smell of Jesus to those who are perishing (2 Cor. 2:15); a tree planted by the water (Ps. 1:3; Jer. 17:7); and a fruitful branch (John 15:8); the disciple whom Jesus loves (Eph. 1:6); and by the grace of God I am what I am (1 Cor. 15:10).

WEEK TWO: WHO YOU ARE

1. Your New Identity

At the cross, Jesus took your _____ of _____

At the cross, Jesus gave you His _____

2. God's righteousness is a _____. You can't earn it or deserve it.
3. When you believe you have God's righteousness, you have _____ over your _____.
4. When you believe you have God's righteousness, you get off the emotional seesaw of _____ and _____.
5. When you believe you have God's righteousness, you know God welcomes you into _____.
6. When you believe you have God's righteousness, you will see the _____, _____, and _____ of the Lord.
7. What do I do to get this righteousness? _____

WEEK THREE: HOW WE LIVE

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

—1 Corinthians 3:10–11

During the last two weeks of Growth Track, we've laid a foundation of redemption through Jesus and I truly believe there are two ways we could go from here.

- We could camp around the foundation of the gospel.
- We could now begin to build on it and see Redemption Church come into its finest hour.

At Redemption Church, you're not just a part of church gathering on the weekends. In fact, it's much larger and more meaningful. You're part of a gospel revolution. Notice I said a gospel revolution. I didn't say a gospel rebellion. What's the difference between a revolution and a rebellion?

- A rebellion is defined by what it stands against, whereas a revolution is defined by what it stands for.
- A rebel is just interested in fighting against something, whereas a revolutionist is fighting for something.
- A rebellion seeks to disrupt, bring down, or destroy a bad ideology or system of government. A revolution seeks to transform it into something better.
- In simple terms, a rebellion seeks to destroy, while a revolution seeks to build something better.

If you think you're a revolutionist but find yourself only destroying and never building, I hate to tell you this, but you're nothing more than a rebel! Redemption Church is a place for revolutionaries who want to see the Church becoming what Christ intended for her – loving God, serving others, and sharing Jesus. What happens after a revolution is even more important than the actual revolution itself! In fact, if people don't go into what the revolution was there to position them for, then the revolution could end up being more destructive to them than the bondage they were previously in. If people never move on to rebuild something the right way, then they never had a revolution, they only had a rebellion. Think about it. If you're in a prison surrounded by a vast desert and you happen to break out and gain your freedom, you're now worse off than you were in prison! You'll die in the desert. It's not just about your freedom; it's about going to a better place. Let me explain. Many people and churches are stuck in a prison of religious legalistic structure and theology that's oppressive, crushing, abusive, slavish, and driven by performance to please God. It's a system of motivating people to live right by guilt and fear and keeping them under a "fall short/never good enough" mentality. Now, we can break people out of that prison by declaring and demonstrating the gospel, but breaking out is only half of the revolution! We have to take them into a better place – a Kingdom of God government and intent for His Church. You need to build and establish people on the foundation of grace and on Christ and His divine order and purpose for the Church. That's what we desire to help you with on this Growth Track.

"According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each take care how

he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."
(1 Corinthians 3:10–11, NLT)

Notice: Not moving on from the gospel but building upon it!

It's great to be free from the wrong things, but now we need to build upon the right things and let grace empower and lead us into what God now has for this church.

While there are many building blocks, consider these important ones as we build:

1. Live the Christ Life

So, you've put your faith in Christ and received His life. It may not look like it on the outside yet, but on the inside a miracle has taken place and everything has changed. You've passed from death to life, darkness to light, out of the kingdom of this world and into the Kingdom of God. You were lost but now you're found. Your spirit has come alive to God. You're now a child of God, born-again to live a new life.

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31, NIV)

God is for you and has a great plan for your life. He knew you before you were even born and had already planned wonderful things for you.

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."
(Ephesians 2:10, ESV):

The good news is, your life is no longer your own, it belongs to Christ. And that's the best possible place you can remain as a human being.

"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20, ESV)

You as a believer are free to live the glorious life He has for you to live. You're no longer living for yourself. You've died to that old life. Your new life is so much better because, not only are you alive in Christ but He's alive in you and wants to live through you in all His glory and power.

That brings us to the next building block...

2. Be Baptized in Water

The first act of obedience as a believer is to be baptized in water. This is a very important thing for you to do and the first step in your spiritual growth. Baptism is an outward declaration of what has taken place inside of you.

What did take place inside of you?

You were united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Everything that physically happened to Christ spiritually happened to you because of your faith in Him. Your old self died and was buried, and you were raised up into new life.

What died? Your entire fallen personality. Your old depressed self. Your old sinful self. The old fearful you was buried. The old anxious, unbelieving you took the bullet. Your poverty and sickness died. Every bit of darkness and disease.

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:3–4, ESV)

Baptism is a public declaration to you, to God, to your family and friends, and to the devil that this all has taken place.

Baptism is where you go down into the water, which symbolizes being buried with Christ. Your old life of sin and believing you could save yourself by your own efforts were crucified with Christ and is buried. As you come up out of the water you're leaving that old life behind in the grave and rising up into new life. Just as Christ rose from the dead, your spirit has come alive to God so you can now walk in newness of life in Him. Baptism doesn't make this all happen; it just shows that you believe that it already happened as you declare it publicly.

The only thing you need to qualify for baptism is to be a believer in Christ. If you believe in Christ and haven't been baptized, it's now time to do it. It may feel a bit strange and it may take some courage, but it's an important thing to do to help you grow as a believer.

3. Be Added to the Church

What did the very first church on earth look like?

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the

Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:42–47, ESV)

In the New Testament when people became believers in Christ they were instantly added to a church. When you receive the life of Christ, you also need to become part of a local church. This is a community of believers who meet together regularly and walk out their Christianity with one another.

There’s no such thing as independent and isolated Christianity in the Bible. Christianity is all about walking together with other believers. This is because God wants us all to be in a church community made up of people who love each other, care for one another, encourage each other, build each other up, worship together, grow in the Word of God together, use our talents to serve others and reach out to the world together.

This church should become a very important part of your life now. Not only for you to grow in Christlike maturity but so that you can also serve and bless others by using the talents and gifting that God has given you. This church is where you live out your Christianity and walk in your destiny. You need Redemption Church and Redemption Church needs you.

Here are a few different pictures of the Church in Scripture:

- **The Church as a body** (1 Cor. 12:12–20, 27; Eph. 4:11–16). Every believer, though an individual, is a part of the Church and has a specific and important role to play. We need each other and everyone is needed.
- **The Church as a flock of sheep** (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1–3). Sheep that are isolated are vulnerable to wolves and other dangers and therefore need to be part of a flock that is cared for and protected by shepherds or pastors.
- **A spiritual house made up of living stones** (1 Pet. 2:1–5, 9–10). We’re all being built into the Church together with God’s people for a purpose – to declare and demonstrate the gospel to everyone, every day, everywhere.

4. Devote Yourself

If an athlete wants to become great at their sport, they need to devote themselves to it. If they’re casual and half-hearted they’ll only be average at best. But to become great and successful it requires focus, discipline, and commitment. If we want to become good at our life of destiny in God and great at loving the world around us with the love of God, it’s going to require devotion and commitment to God, His Word, His Church, and prayer. This is what the people of the very first church did.

Consider these four things:

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” (Acts 2:42, ESV)

No one can force you to be a committed Christian, you simply have to devote yourself. God won't even force you. You have a free will. The early church Christians saw the importance of living a devoted life to Christ and His Church and therefore committed themselves to walking in relationship with Christ and with each other.

There were four main things the Bible says they devoted themselves to:

- The apostles' teaching – the Word of God

It's the word of God that builds our faith and brings us to maturity so that we can walk in the authority and faith of Jesus and impact our world. Every believer needs to grow in his or her knowledge of the Word of God. In order to exercise the wisdom of the Word we first need to know the Word. Therefore devote yourself to studying the Bible and getting it into your heart. It will powerfully transform your life.

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17, ESV)

- Fellowship – Large church gatherings

The original Greek word for fellowship is the word *koinonia*. It refers to the Church regularly meeting together. But not just in a superficial or impersonal way, but rather a much deeper and meaningful way of actually sharing life together. Where we care for each other, build each other up, and partner in the purposes of God together.

"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts." (Acts 2:46, NIV)

- The breaking of bread – small church gatherings

This refers to smaller group fellowship where it is more practical to get together and celebrate the communion meal (the breaking of bread). The Early Church met corporately together as one community as well as from house to house in smaller more intimate settings, such as our Equip classes. This is where you can develop closer relationships with other believers, be discipled and disciple others, encourage each other, discuss the Word of God together and grow in it, worship Jesus together, and celebrate His grace in each other's lives.

"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts." (Acts 2:46, NIV)

- Prayer meetings

This refers to praying together as a church. The Early Church actually met together every day to pray. Here's what happened in one of their prayer meetings just after they had faced some persecution for preaching the gospel.

It is clear from Acts 4:23–24 and 29–31 that the life of a believer is one of prayer. Prayer declares our ultimate trust and need for God. Prayer is not a sign we feel we can do it on our own and don't need God. But prayer brings God into our situations and allows Him to rule in them. Prayer is us partnering together with God to see heaven coming to earth all around us and God's purposes being fulfilled through our lives. The Bible is full of references to prayer and testimonies of the powerful things that happen when people pray.

5. Generously Give

There was a grace upon the Early Church to give and see the church growing strong so many would be reached by the gospel. This grace of giving is an ability and faith from God that trusts that God is our ultimate source and that He owns all things. It's an ability and faith to go beyond our natural means and limitations and get into God's ability and means. It's a trust in God and a love for other people that releases generosity through us to see the Church being taken care of and the gospel being preached.

"All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. From time to time, those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need." (Acts 4:32–35, NIV)

Consider four powerful points from this Scripture:

Verse 32: "No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had." The Early Church had a revelation that nothing they owned actually belonged to them but all belonged to God and therefore were unafraid to give. This is a beautiful revelation to have. People who believe that God is their source and that everything they have belongs to Him and are not afraid to give. They were moved by the love and generosity of God to go beyond themselves and bless others. This was a purposeful giving to build the church up to see many being saved and cared for.

Verse 34: "From time to time, those who owned land or houses sold them." God doesn't necessarily want us to just sell everything and give it away right now. Rather, He wants us to live a lifestyle of generosity and care for others. This involves doing extremely generous things at times.

This is something that should become part of our normal lives. Regular giving to God through the Church to reach and care for others is a new lifestyle we should practice.

Verse 35: "And put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need." The apostles were the leaders of the Church. People brought to them and they distributed it. This is simply God's management system. Our giving should be to God first through our Church and then administered by the leaders, who are called by God to govern the affairs of the Church. When this system works well, the Church is cared for and the gospel of Jesus Christ reaches many people!

Redemption, become generous givers and pray about your financial commitment to support your Church with regular giving that helps to carry and fund the mission of Redemption Church. Do this in accordance with your income.

WEEK THREE: HOW WE LIVE

At Redemption Church, you are part of a gospel revolution. Not a rebellion.

A rebellion is defined by what it stands _____.

A revolution is defined by what it stands _____.

1. Live the Christ _____.

2. Be baptized in _____.

3. Be added to the _____.

4. Devote _____.

5. Generously _____.

WEEK FOUR: HOW WE CHANGE OUR WORLD

"We love because he first loved us."
– 1 John 4:19 (NIV)

It's been our desire through Start Track to unveil the love of God in your life. As you grow in your understanding of the great love that God has for you, you'll discover an awakening and motivation within you. In response to His love, you'll grow and flourish. You'll find yourself reaching up, loving God more and more (and even reaching in, loving everybody else around you more and more too).

So how does the love of God that we say we have on the inside manifest itself on the outside? How do we really love God? How can we know that we're really showing God, as well as showing others, that we love Him?

Consider two practical ways we demonstrate this here at Redemption Church:

1. We love God with our ministry.

In other words, we love God by taking the gifts, the talents, and the abilities that God gives you and using them, both inside and outside the church, to serve other people.

Incidentally, the other two parts of Redemption's method actually flow from the first part. Always keep in mind the foundational part of the Church's method is to love God. I do believe if you love God you'll serve others and share Jesus—without struggle. Not "I have to," but "I get to!"

You ought to see every act of service you ever do, whether it's in the church on the weekend or outside the church on Monday, as simply another way to love God. A parent can understand this. You raise a child, feed that child, change that child's dirty diaper, wipe that child's nose, bathe that child. You do everything for that child. Do you do all of that because of what they can do for you? No. You do it for one reason, because you love that child! When you love God the way you ought to love God then you'll want to serve others the way He's equipped you to serve them.

Do you come to church to be served or to serve?

We're undoubtedly here to serve and we do so through our Dream Team. And we want you to join and become part the Dream Team at Redemption Church.

As a member of the Dream Team, we all are called to...

1. Connect with new people.

People matter to God, so they matter to us.

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." (Philippians 2:3-4, NIV)

2. Build relationships with my team.

Real life change happens... real leaders are developed... when we take a step toward intentional relationships.

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." (Philippians 1:3-5, NIV)

3. Empower each other.

We are a people of purpose, working together on purpose.

"He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ."
(Colossians 1:28, NIV)

4. Celebrate the wins.

There is nothing more powerful than a life changed by Christ.

"In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15:10, NIV)

TO BEGIN SERVING ON THE DREAM TEAM

1. Complete Start Track.
2. Fill out a Dream Team card and select the Team you're interested in joining.
3. Connect with a Dream team leader for your next steps.

DREAM TEAM DESCRIPTIONS:

REDEMPTION STUDENTS: Do you have a passion for the next generation? Serving in Redemption Students is for you! Whether it's Junior High (6th-8th grade) or High school (9th-12th grade), this team provides areas to serve a variety of age groups.

REDEMPTION YOUNG ADULTS: This is an exciting and growing team of young adults (18-35) that do life together and are empowered and fueled by knowing Christ in them. Redemption Young Adults is an ideal team to join if you are interested in helping with events and outreaches or desiring to do life with other young adults in a small group setting.

REDEMPTION KIDS: This team creates an environment where children are consistently exposed to the real love of Jesus. Through worship, videos, skits, small groups, greeting, games, and more, this team intentionally invests in the lives of our children.

WORSHIP & CREATIVE ARTS: Bring your creativity and tech savvy to this team that reaches thousands by delivering the Word and worship through camera, lighting, visual graphics, and sound elements. Even if you don't know how but are interested, we will provide training and equip you with the tools you will need to be an incredibly vital part of the team!

SAFETY TEAM: This team helps protect the people of Redemption Church by monitoring the facility inside and out, making sure our Redemption family experiences a safe environment.

PARKING LOT TEAM: This incredible team provides a welcoming and cultivating atmosphere of hospitality across our campus system for everyone who attends a weekend service or event at Redemption Church. The goal is to create an irresistible and friendly environment for our guests from their first drive-in to their final exit.

LOBBY HOST: This team connects and directs the many guests traveling through our lobbies during the weekend services and special events. From "Welcome Home" to "You Belong," this team aims to vocally and tangibly help our guests feel at-home when entering the doors of Redemption Church.

RESOURCE CENTER: From our Pastor's picks to our equip class teachings, this team helps equip our guests with new covenant content that will empower their grace journey beyond the walls of our church.

WORSHIP CENTER HOST: When guests enter our worship center, this amazing team is responsible for lovingly guiding them to their seats and serving them throughout our weekend worship services and special events.

CONNECTION HOST: This impactful team is responsible for connecting with new guests and families at Redemption. From our Connect with Me stations to our New People Party after each weekend worship service, this team serves as the key echoes of our welcoming culture at Redemption.

Another practical way that we show God that we love Him?

2. We love God with our money.

Generosity is really the "hidden gem" in the process of being the church that God's called and equipped us to be. Think about it; there's very little we do that doesn't require some type of financial decision. Do we go out to eat; do we grab a Starbucks on the way to work; do we splurge for the newest and more expensive shoes or buy the ones from the clearance rack; do we buy a new car or a used car? If we're honest with ourselves, we would all likely agree that we've experienced the allure of money at some point in our lives. For this reason, Jesus spoke often

on the topic of our treasure or possessions, our attitude about our possessions, and in the end, who really owns everyone's possessions. We only need to look to the story of the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16–22) to realize that the stewardship or management of our resources is very important.

At Redemption Church, we talk about generosity, and we do so without apology because we understand that generosity goes well beyond our wallets, and it impacts much more than just our money. Generosity is a by-product of our spiritual transformation. It's a thermometer that gauges what we really believe about God's nature. John 3:16, "God so loved the world that He gave..."

As our minds are transformed by a greater understanding that the One who supplies all our needs and who lacks nothing now lives in us, the more generous we become. Generosity is a matter of the heart. It's our lifestyle.

This week we're looking at the behavior patterns of the Christian giver. Remember that these patterns are produced by the grace of God working within us. We're to believe God's promises and receive them by surrendering in trust to our Father God. We know that His grace will give us both the motivation and the power to become progressively Christlike in character. This is how we, as believers, do it:

1. GIVE WITH THE RIGHT MOTIVE

Christlike giving is supernatural giving. In speaking of the extravagant giving, "beyond their ability," of the Macedonian church, Paul challenged the Corinthians:

"Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving." (2 Corinthians 8:7, NLT)

The primary motive of a Christlike giver's heart is to give everything to God, to honor and love Father God because he or she desires to be like Him. The Christlike giver values eternal treasure in heaven over temporal, material treasures here on earth. This type of desire is something that God plants within our hearts as we surrender to Him.

Christlike givers understand that they're children of God, and they understand the incredible responsibility given to them to manage the resources of His kingdom. They trust God's continuing provision for them and can release their resources to bless others and invest in and increase God's kingdom here on earth. Unlike people in the world who fear lack and selfishly try to hoard their resources to feel secure, Christlike givers know they can't lose. They know the increase of God's kingdom will never cease.

In contrast, the current "prosperity gospel" so popular in the church teaches that Christians should be wealthy and thus appeals to the selfishness of their hearts. If we give in order to get, we forfeit the real eternal rewards God promised. When

we're focused on material gain, we show that we're still trusting in wealth for our provision and security.

Paul gave the Corinthian church some explicit instructions on how they should give:

"Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. 'For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.'" (2 Corinthians 9:6–7, NLT)

2. GIVE GENEROUSLY

Several things are immediately apparent here. Paul reminds the Corinthian church of the laws of sowing and reaping, and he encourages them to give generously. God loves generous, extravagant givers. Their actions say that they trust Him as their provider, and their hearts are Christlike. They readily give beyond their ability without regard to circumstances. The Gospel of John relates the story of one extravagant giver:

"Six days before the Passover celebration began, Jesus arrived in Bethany, the home of Lazarus—the man he had raised from the dead. A dinner was prepared in Jesus' honor. Martha served, and Lazarus was among those who ate with him. Then Mary took a twelve-ounce jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard, and she anointed Jesus' feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance.

"But Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would soon betray him, said, 'That perfume was worth a year's wages. It should have been sold and the money given to the poor.' Not that he cared for the poor—he was a thief, and since he was in charge of the disciples' money, he often stole some for himself.

"Jesus replied, 'Leave her alone. She did this in preparation for my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.'" (John 12:1–8, NLT)

This story illustrates several things about the generosity of Christlike givers. Often their generosity is criticized, because it exposes the selfish motives of others. Judas stated a true fact: the price of the nard was a year's wages. But he could only focus on its value materially. Jesus responded to the deep love in Mary that prompted her extravagant gift. In fact, He said that wherever His story was told, the generous act of Mary would be included. She was to be perpetually honored for her gift. Our Father God is an extravagant giver, and He's drawn to this trait in His children, rewarding them abundantly when it's present.

3. GIVE THOUGHTFULLY AND PRAYERFULLY

Note that the passage in 2 Corinthians 9:7 says that each man gives “what you have decided in your heart to give.” It’s a deliberate decision based on prayer and planning. Christlike givers think about it, pray about it with their spouse, and take their giving seriously. They’re led by the Holy Spirit and not by their emotions.

I believe, based on this text, that impulsive giving is immature giving. You don’t give just because you were moved emotionally, or somebody manipulated you. You give because you thought it out and were led by the Spirit. It’s doing what you see the Father doing. You decide in your heart to be prayerfully led by the Spirit. This means that you’re walking in ongoing intimacy with Father God. You’re open to giving whatever and whenever He directs.

Like piano playing, giving is a skill. With practice, we get better at it. We can learn to give more, give more often, and give more strategically. We teach the pursuit of excellence in our vocations. Why not make giving something we study, discuss, and sharpen, striving for excellence?

4. GIVE WILLINGLY

The text says that giving shouldn’t be done reluctantly. Circle that word. Christlike givers never give out of guilt. Nor do they give grudgingly, that is, with a “grin and bear it” attitude. That’s legalistic giving, and Father God wants us to have no part in it. It’s not a “have to” thing; it’s a “get to” thing!

You’re the only one who can make a decision on how much you’ll give. It’s between you and the Holy Spirit. There’s no condemnation. No one has the right to judge your giving. Never give out of guilt, compulsion, or from a grudging heart. Be aware that at times you’ll need to pray for a willing and eager spirit, just like we need to pray about any ministry or area of commitment in our life.

5. GIVE CHEERFULLY

I think this is the most important characteristic of all. The Greek word for “cheerful” is *hilaros*. We get the word “hilarious” from it. God loves a cheerful giver. The New Testament Christians loved to give. Unfortunately, today in most church services across the country, when you take the offering, it’s the low point in the service. It’s when everything comes to a standstill. God says that in the New Testament, they were hilarious givers. Do you know why happy people are giving people, and giving people are happy people? The root word for “miserable” is “miser.” Misers are miserable. You don’t learn to be generous and give cheerfully, if you’re stingy and always worrying about what you have rather than giving it away, you’ll never be a Christlike giver. The world is out there thinking, “If I get more, and get more...I’m going to be happy.” But God says that if I give more and more, the happier I’ll be. Jesus said that. He said that the way to happiness isn’t to amass personal wealth, but to give.

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35, NLT)

People who give consistently are happier and healthier. Karl Menninger, the dean of American psychiatry, noted, "Giving is a criterion of mental health. Generous people are rarely mentally ill." I don't believe many Christians have that revelation. If they did, they'd give more. The most generous people I know are the happiest people I know. We're so blessed when we give, and this includes being really happy. God's primary interest in our giving is our heart attitude, not the size of our wallet. He's far more concerned with the quality of the giver than the quantity of the gift.

6. GIVE PROPHETICALLY

Christlike givers stay prayed up and are sensitive to the leading of the Spirit. They find multiple occasions to give, some of which are outside the usual channels and beyond the tithe. At Redemption Church, prophetic givers are Kingdom Builders.

Paul described to the Corinthian church some very important blessings promised by God to Christlike givers. They're found in our theme text, 2 Corinthians 9:6-14:

- **Verse 8: Christlike givers are promised that their needs will be supplied.**
- **Verses 8 and 11: Christlike givers' ministry is multiplied. They're blessed to be a blessing.**
- **Verses 10 and 11: Christlike givers will be blessed with abundance so that they can give more.**
- **Verses 11 and 12: Christlike giving brings praise to Father God.**
- **Verse 13: People will praise God for you, your obedience to God and your generosity.**
- **Verse 14: People will be praying for you and asking God to bless you.**

How would you like to partner with Father God in creating this atmosphere of generosity, abundant supply, blessing, and thanksgiving? How would you like to live the good life? Can you imagine living in such an atmosphere? The more we enter into Christlike giving, the more we change our personal atmosphere and the atmosphere of the world around us. This is operating in our authority and dominion in advancing God's kingdom here on earth. It's becoming who we were created to be, and fulfilling our purpose and destiny. May God loosen our grasp on possessions and grow in us a heart to advance His kingdom through radical generosity.

Giving Ladder

KINGDOM BUILDER - I give beyond 10% to Redemption

TITHER - I give 10% of my income to Redemption

REGULAR - I consistently give a portion of my income
(but less than 10%) to Redemption

OCCASIONAL - I give to Redemption, but inconsistently

FIRST TIME - I've never given to Redemption before.

Ways to give



WEEK FOUR: HOW WE CHANGE OUR WORLD

Consider practical ways we demonstrate love here at Redemption Church.

1. We love God with our _____.
2. As a member of the Dream Team, we all are called to...
 - a. Connect with new _____
 - b. Build Relationship with my _____
 - c. Empower _____
 - d. Celebrate the _____

Read through the Dream Team Descriptions. Make notes of the ones that most interest you.

3. We love God with our _____.
 - a. Give with the right _____.
 - b. Give _____.
 - c. Give _____ and _____.
 - d. Give _____.
 - e. Give _____.
 - f. Give _____.