

*Darren Jer grew up in the suburbs of New York City and has lived in Manhattan for the last 15 years. He is a regular at the 6pm service, is part of a Tuesday night fellowship group, volunteers at the Bowery Mission and is a big fan of The Well. In his day job Darren works in sales and business development at a financial technology startup called MarketFactory which he co-founded in June of 2007. At a Leaders Reception on Monday, October 26, he discussed his experience with the coming “Gospel in Life” course for lay leaders.*

If someone asked me, “what’s so special about your church?” the Gospel in Life curriculum [piloted in Spring 2009 and to be released Spring 2010] would cover it all.

It accurately represents the main pillars of Redeemer’s vision and how we should live the gospel in all aspects of our life, presented in an 8-week small group study. The topics encompass: the city, the heart, idolatry, community, witnessing, work, justice, and eternity.

Our small group was stunned by the richness of the references used to further our understanding of the biblical truths being revealed to us. Excerpts, quotations and summaries from the likes of John Calvin, Martin Luther, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, Martin Lloyd Jones, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Rodney Stark, Derek Kidner, Lesslie Newbigin, John Stott, DA Carson and of course, CS Lewis! We felt like we were attending the Oscars of the theological world.

And the wide array of writings from different periods of history felt like invitations! Invitations to go to the library, to read more, to delve deeper, to explore the times when the faiths of these leaders were tried and to enrich our relationship with God through their stories. It was so encouraging; these studies assailed from all possible angles the hardness of our hearts so that we would become even more convicted of God’s passion for us. Our small group read together, prayed together, and then asked God to print His word on our hearts.

There was a fantastic immediacy to the Gospel in Life study. Each week the study guide provided additional readings, exercises, questions and projects to delve into independently at home. One week focused on evangelism and the do’s and don’ts of how to host an event to share the gospel with friends, neighbors, or co-workers. For example, Redeemer’s Dance Ministry was performing a new work at the time, so we bought tickets and invited a large group of friends and co-workers to attend. We prayed they would come and that the Holy Spirit would be with us, and then we shared a meal together afterwards – it was a great way for our friends to meet our Christian community and to start to see the gospel lived out in this community.

Another study challenged us to assess our commitment to the poor, to the marginalized, to the outcasts. Our homework was to decide on a volunteer activity at some type of justice or mercy ministry; we showed up at Father’s Heart

in the Lower East Side early on a Saturday morning to help with breakfast service and pray with the guests. I puttered around the breakfast tables awkwardly trying to strike up a conversation with a guest that might lead to prayer. Leave it up to God for me to meet James, a gentleman from the lower east side that ended up witnessing to ME the wonders Jesus Christ has done in his life. I went to serve that morning but instead it was I who received the gift. How beautifully humbling and perfect is God's way.

I am incredibly excited about Gospel in Life's debut this coming Spring because it continues everything the RENEW Campaign will establish. A neighborhood-centric practicing of the gospel, carried out by lay leaders equipped with new knowledge and a passion for God's glory, a Christian community that is devoted to one another, and is as desperately reliant in prayer as Redeemer was in its first service 20 years ago. As we've heard throughout the Gospel in Life course – the gospel changes everything – it changes hearts, it changes communities, it changes the world. Take the Gospel in Life course if you possibly can, and may Christ dwell within us as we weave His fabric of shalom.