

Redeemer Community Partnership Building Better Neighborhoods

South Central Los Angeles

Spring 2010



Location, Location, Location

By Richard Parks, Executive Director

Growing up in our suburban home my mom would write sayings on wooden shingles that I would burn into the wood with a magnifying glass. The “Bloom Where You Are Planted” shingle hung on our wall for much of my childhood.

It is a fine saying, as far as it goes. However, I wonder when we consider where to plant ourselves—where to rent an apartment after college and where to buy a home—what values guide our decisions?

Do we look for proximity to good schools, shopping, cultural and recreational amenities? Safety, beauty, and proximity to people like us are usually givens. Perhaps distance to work and social status are important considerations.

Proximity to people in need is generally seen as a negative. Neighborhoods darkened by violence, broken families, and failed institutions typically do not make the list. Little consideration is given to where our skills and resources might be needed most.

All this raises the question, are our location decisions guided more by the American dream or Jesus’ teaching?

I am convinced that where we plant ourselves is one of the most significant decisions we make in life. Now that I am a teenager of inner-city living—having lived in South Central L.A. for the last 18 years—I am struck by how profoundly my location shapes me and our family.

Our son Jordan attends a local elementary school that I passed daily for years without a prayer or thought. That changed rather suddenly the day we enrolled him. Since then I have delved into the details of the schools performance, governance structure, and politics. I have come face to face with an educational system that is limiting children’s futures rather than expanding them.

Jordan is thriving at the school, pressing himself through Harry Potter books in first grade because he can’t wait for our reading time together. However, two out of three 3rd graders at the school are not proficient in reading and half the 5th graders leave for middle school without basic English language arts proficiency.

I am facilitating a parent working group that is developing a strategic plan for raising student achievement. In this process we are confronting entrenched patterns of divisiveness, low-expectations, and neglect. Mobilizing parents and working together has been a great joy. The work of reconciling opposing constituencies while trying to maintain a godly perspective and attitude has been an enormous challenge intellectually and spiritually.

Jesus has been drawing me to himself for the help I need. His teaching on peacemaking and becoming a child of God (Matthew 5:1-11) has been my daily guide and mold. By grace God is doing the arduous work of fitting me for heaven; growing humility, a heart that mourns, meekness, a hunger for righteousness, mercy, a pure heart—the essential elements of peacemaking that I am so lacking in.

Continued on back...



Isaiah 58:12

“Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.”

September 7-11

Want to help your church get more involved in the needs of your community? Want to see first-hand best practice examples of churches and Christian community development organizations working together to transform their communities? **Come to the Christian Community Development Association's (CCDA) annual conference with us!** This is an exceptional opportunity get coaching on your community ministry passion. For more information visit www.cdda.org or contact us. We would love to have you join us!

Continued from front...

Bob Lupton, an inner-city developer and author, writes:

“As the disruptive words of the Teacher have penetrated the substrata of my value system, I have become persuaded that location, location, and location are indeed the critical selection criteria for those who desire to bloom where God has planted them. And the underlying values of those who perceive the Kingdom will be disclosed in the kind of questions they ask.

What community lacks the talents and treasures that have been entrusted to us? What neighborhood will the unique leaven of our lives cause to rise? What school is most in need of the educational and moral values that our families bring? Location, perhaps more than any other decision, disturbs the delicate balance we have tried to achieve between mammon and spirit. In this issue, the American dream collides with the vision of God's Kingdom here on earth, exposing them to be as different from each other as darkness and light. Convenience, security, and status are confronted by self-sacrifice, downward mobility, and obedience. The instinct to save one's life stares at a cross.”

Location opens our eyes to people and needs we would not otherwise see or understand. Location profoundly shapes our faith and hope for God's work in the world. Location calls forth our gifts and talents for deeply significant works of justice, advocacy, and compassion that God has prepared in advance for us to walk in. Intentional, costly re-location stands at the very heart of the gospel we proclaim, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” (John 1:14)

Reflecting on re-location:
John 1:14, Phil 2:5-11, Eph 2:10



Commended for their love

Keo Booker, Colleen Doran, Dawn Powell, Emily Gustafson, Marissa Barrocas, and Christal Green for leading our classes this year!

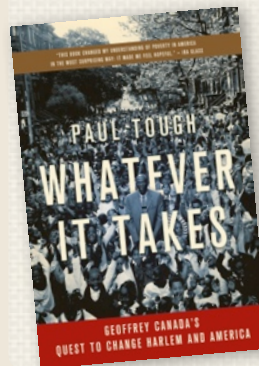
All of our volunteer Reading and Math Buddies who worked one-on-one with kids!

Hamilton Yang for creating a working computer lab in the tutoring center!


Everyone helping to prepare the summer enrichment program in July. Please pray for this time, for the kids who will enroll, and for the group of interns who will be teaching our classes.

Book Review: Whatever It Takes

by Paul Tough



An inspiring effort to lift an entire community of children out of poverty in a 100 square-block neighborhood of Harlem. This secular experiment, hailed as a national model, offers many lessons for the church.

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