

# Being a redemptive influence in the marketplace

**Living out your faith and holding true to Jesus in a society and secular marketplace that lives by a very different story, is hard.** In our current context where society is losing touch with the Christian story and we will not easily get people to 'come to church', what might it look like for followers of Jesus to be formed to be effective at **engaging right where God has placed us?** Seed's purpose is to grow followers of Jesus who embody a distinctive way of engaging society - what we call Redemptive Influence. This session will give a framework for Redemptive influence, and some tools and support to co-design HOW we can do that, both together and individually at TCBC.

## 1. TEACHING – *Being Renewed:*

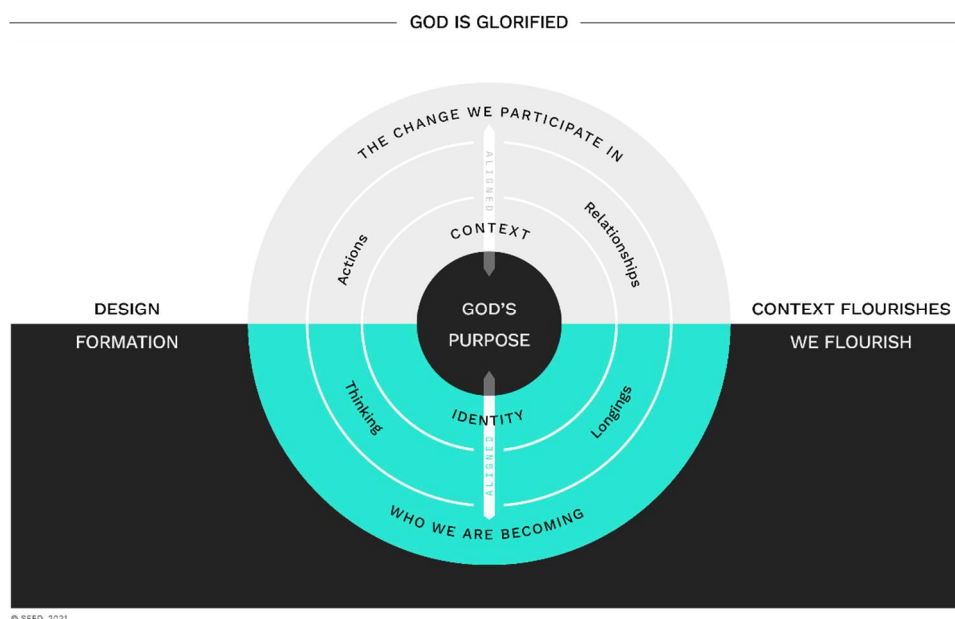
Seed focuses on growing Christians for Redemptive Influence in the world through our purpose-built Redemptive Design process. It's an innovative process that connects formation with design.

- **Formation** is the process of aligning who you are becoming with who God made you to be.
- **Design** is the process of tangibly participating in God's work of redemption and renewal in your particular context

### Foundations of Redemptive Design

The foundational concept behind Redemptive Design is outlined in the figure below. We start by acknowledging that God's purpose is the foundation for finding our particular place and purpose in the world. From that foundation, we help marketplace leaders discover their own purpose, within God's purposes for the world, by exploring two key concepts:

1. Identity – Who am I? Who has God created me to be?
2. Context – Where has God placed me? What is God's design/intention for that place?



The rest of the process is then about seeking to align both ourselves and our context with God's design and purposes. That means aligning the way we think and what we believe with what God says to be true of the world. It means aligning our desires and what we long for with what God desires for us. It means aligning our actions and the way we relate to others with God's intention.

## LIVING UP TO WHO GOD HAS MADE US TO BE IN THE CONTEXTS HE HAS PLACED US

We also need to recognise that we don't do any of that work of personal alignment in a vacuum. God places us in a context. If we are truly being formed in the ways of Jesus, then our purpose extends to aligning the things we make, and the change we seek to create in the world, with God's foundational purposes.

All of our energy and focus is drawn to God's purpose as the foundation. Contrary to most approaches to purpose, which rely on determining goals that we set out to achieve, this approach always drives us to be formed by God's story and shaped by God's grace. Formation is not about self-determination, it is about discernment and faithfulness.

From that foundation our purpose is to be faithful in the way we live. *"You have taken off the old self with its practices, and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator"* (Colossians 3: 9-10). We live into and up to who God has already made us to be by his grace in Jesus, in the contexts where God has placed us.

To sum up Seed's approach:

### Using Redemptive Design

*(a distinctive approach to formation)*

**We grow Redemptive Communities & Redemptive Changemakers**

*(a new kind of community/disciple)*

**To become a Redemptive Influence in society**

*(a distinctive approach to witness/mission)*



In Redemptive Design learning is vital, as a means for forming both our identity and our understanding of the world in which we live. (Romans 12: 1-3) However, learning is a means to helping people *participate* in God's world – to discover and step into their place in God's story as it unfolds in this world.

## Putting the Pieces Together

In scripture we find that God is interested in both *who we are becoming* and *what we do*. God is particularly interested in whether what we do and how we live are aligned with who he has made us to be.

In the book of Ephesians, having spent 3 chapters giving us deep insight into God's purposes for humans and our identity in Christ, the author writes in Ephesians 4:1 *"I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received."*(NIV) He then proceeds to explain what that kind of life looks like.

Similarly, in Ephesians, we find a God deeply interested in humans and our salvation, but also in how we hold ourselves in the world, our good works (Eph 2: 8-10), our relationships (Eph 2: 14-16, 21-22). All this sits alongside a concern for all of creation, and a reconciling of all things under Jesus Christ (Eph 1: 10).

Throughout scripture we find a God that calls people to himself and also sends them to participate in his work in the world.

The point is that God's love for us and God's love for God's world are deeply connected and intertwined. God shapes and forms us *in context*.

Redemptive Design is a more contextualised and embodied approach to formation. Through it, we are seeking to provide an alternative approach to formation that is distinctive in the following ways that any follower of Jesus can put into practice right where God has placed them:

## 2. PRACTICE – *Being Intentional*:

What does Redemptive Influence practically look like?

**Humble Confidence NOT Anxious & Fearful** (see Revelation 21:5-6) - We live like we believe Jesus has finished God's work, and his way has immense value for people and the world.

**Solution Focused NOT Defensive & Critical** (see Genesis 1:27-28) - Our primary posture is to identify, cultivate and create what we are FOR not simply naming what we are AGAINST.

**Concern for all of life NOT Simply saving souls** (See again Genesis 1:26; Matt 28: 18-20; Mark 1:15) - We are passionate about people meeting Jesus and acknowledging him as Lord & saviour, but people are not statistics or projects, so we seek the flourishing of the whole person, their relationships and their place/context. We understand and address systemic and cultural aspects of life, recognizing their impact on both people and creation. We are stewards of God's good earth that God loves.

**Disruptive Creativity NOT Swimming with the tide** (see Romans 12:1-3) - We don't swim with the cultural tide. We have a keen eye for brokenness and injustice, but we're not content with naming what is wrong. We faithfully seek to disrupt brokenness/sinfulness by creating things that embody beauty, justice and grace.

**Embodied & Experiential NOT Theoretical** (see John 1:14) - Following Jesus is a way of life, not merely a set of beliefs, so we are meaning-makers and value-creators, not simply truth-tellers. We seek to turn our beliefs into tangible reality. We invite people to step inside God's story and experience the way of Jesus.

**Inviting & Generous NOT Seeking to control** (See the story of the Crucifixion. Matthew 20:28; Philippians 2: 5-8) - We don't need to hold onto power. We are characterized by empathy and listening. We humbly seek the best for the other and for society, while holding to truth. We will be confident and steadfast, but humble, when we disagree with others about what the good life looks like.

**Participating/Co-Creating.** These distinctives could be summed up in the notion of *participation*.

In his book *Culture Making*,<sup>1</sup> Andy Crouch highlights the tendency that Christians have to condemn and critique culture. While it is entirely appropriate to discern and name things that are contrary to God's purposes as revealed in scripture, we need to recognise that when condemnation and critique are our only, or even our dominant posture, to the culture around us, we place ourselves in a position of superiority over our culture.

Crouch argues that as image bearers of a Creator God, we are invited to take the things that God has created and make something of them in the world. Our primary posture to culture should not be to *condemn* or even *transform* culture, but rather to *cultivate* and *create* culture. We take the things that God has made and we make something of them. We are invited to co-create. As those who can 'see' reality differently, we have a responsibility and privilege to embody that new reality in the world. In doing so, we *participate*, as members of God's family in the outworking of God's story. As we do that, it necessarily disrupts the brokenness of the world, providing an opportunity to demonstrate the beauty of the Christian story and to invite people to join us and to live within that story.

If that is our goal, then an approach to formation that focuses merely on knowledge acquisition falls short of the mark. It is too theoretical and not embodied enough. It is too individual and not communal enough. The impetus for this not only comes from a theological foundation, it also makes sense in our current context. We Christians are very interested in truth. However, while we remain focused on truth, most of our society is currently having a conversation about value. We are having parallel conversations with our culture, meaning we rarely engage with one another.

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<sup>1</sup> Crouch, A. *Culture Making: Recovering our Creative Calling*, Intervarsity Press, 2008

Our society is much more interested in exploring questions like ‘what does this mean for me?’ or ‘what do I get out of this?’ than whether something is right or true. While we must not let go of the truth conversation, we also have much to contribute on questions of value. In fact, our conception of value and meaning have the potential to be beautifully disruptive in our current context.

### What does this mean for marketplace leaders?

All of this suggests the need for an approach to formation that is far more participatory and embodied.

This would likely mean that we need to look at innovative approaches to how we understand our work and engage at work. Our marketplace is not merely the outworking of our faith. It is the context in which our faith comes alive. There is potential to use those opportunities to bring the Christian story and the reality of who God is alive for people.

In those contexts, here is a brief outline of a process that could be utilized:

Choose an issue that needs a solution or a group of people who need support.

1. **Imagine** - Take some time to imagine what a future that is more aligned with God’s intention for creation might look like?
2. **Empathy/Listening** - What are the felt needs of the people we are seeking to serve? What do they value? Where could Jesus and the way of Jesus make a difference for them?
3. **Analyse** - What needs to change to move toward a different future? What are the barriers getting in the way? Where is God already at work?
4. **Create** - What could we do differently? How could we move toward the different future?
5. **Reflect** - What did we learn? What can we change? Where did we see God’s redemptive work in action?

### 3. TAKE STEPS TO GROW AS A REDEMPITIVE INFLUENCE IN THE MARKETPLACE:

Your workplace – the context where God has placed you is a canvas, where God invites you to co-create. You have been designed to be a Redemptive Influence in God’s world.

Let’s re-imagine our approach to formation for the marketplace. We can be part of raising up a generation of marketplace leaders who are deeply engaged in their context. People who are shaped by the Christian story. People who are solution-focused, who believe that the Christian story has something of value to offer the world. People who are able to translate what they believe about Jesus and his ways into tangible expressions that others can touch, taste and see. People who go to work with a humble confidence in Jesus, because they understand and have experienced the difference he makes in their own lives and in the world.

- A. To grow in this practice, what is **one idea you want to experiment with this coming week / month?** How will you do that?
- B. **Is there someone that you could connect with for mutual encouragement, learning and accountability to deepen in this practice?**<sup>2</sup> It might be your spouse, sibling, close friend, someone in your life group or someone else at this workshop.

Visit [www.seed.org.au](http://www.seed.org.au) for more ideas and resources on how to be a redemptive influence in the marketplace. For more ideas and tools see [www.seed.org.au/redemptive-design](http://www.seed.org.au/redemptive-design)

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<sup>2</sup> This is a practical way we can fulfill our vision together at TCBC “Transforming lives through Christ-centred community”. “Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25).