



DESIGNED FOR *move*



Redemptive
Design

Introduction to Redemptive Design
**An approach to formation
purpose-built for our times**

We need a new approach to formation



If the church is to enable people to faithfully follow Jesus in our current cultural context, we need a new approach to formation.

In recent years, over a relatively short period of time, society has largely stopped looking to the church (and Christians in general) for answers to life's questions. It's no secret that the church finds itself more marginalised than it has been in previous decades.

Beyond our walls, we find people and communities that are increasingly distant from the Christian story, missing out on all the benefits of the full life that Jesus has to offer.

As this shift is happening, we know many Christians are disillusioned at the disconnect between their faith and the rest of their lives. Christians now step into a world each day where their foundational story/worldview is not shared by the rest of society, causing them to question the relevance of their faith as it relates to the world they live in.

At best, they are frustrated at the lack of meaning or purpose. At worst, they have given up on church and sometimes even Jesus, finding their faith is powerless to give them a clear sense of purpose and place in the world.

These shifts mean that many of the church's current approaches to discipling people are no longer fit-for-purpose. They were built in a different time, to develop people for a different cultural setting.

In this new context, we need disciples who are able to engage and faithfully witness to Jesus beyond the walls of the church. We need disciples who are formed and equipped to connect and translate the way of Jesus for a culture who have lost touch with the foundations of the Christian story.

We need a new kind of disciple.

That means we need a new approach to formation.

That is why Seed exists.

The purpose of Seed is to grow Christians who engage effectively in society.



Understanding Purpose



If we're going to engage effectively in society, we first need to have the right posture toward society. This posture is deeply connected to our perspective on our purpose as followers of Jesus. Purpose is like the foundation of a building. If the foundation is right, the building is strong. Similarly, if we understand our purpose properly, then we get our posture toward society right. And if we get our posture right, our engagement becomes more faithful and more effective.

If you looked at much of current engagement by Christians in society, you would be forgiven for thinking that our purpose and posture in relation to society was:

1. To win
2. To be right
3. To defend God

But God doesn't need us to win, God doesn't need us to prove we are right, and certainly doesn't need our protection. At Seed we are exploring the idea that the purpose of the Christian life (and therefore our engagement in society) has more to do with:

1. **Becoming** who God has made us to be
2. **Participating** with God in His work of redemption and renewal

In the book of Ephesians, the author spends the first 3 chapters giving us deep insight into God's purposes for creation and for humans. We find a God deeply interested in human salvation, but also in how we hold ourselves in the world, our good works and our relationships. All this sits alongside a concern for all of creation to be reconciled and renewed through Jesus.



Understanding Purpose *Continued*



In Ephesians 4:1, the author writes “ 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.

It seems clear from Ephesians, and from a wider reading of scripture, that God is interested in both *who we are becoming and what we do*.

Perhaps we have reduced the Christian story to something too small. Can I invite you to reflect for a moment on the phenomenal reality that through Jesus’ death and resurrection, the God of the universe invites you and me to become part of his family? We are adopted as children. We become members of God’s household.

At the same time, we are also privileged to be sent as ambassadors of the family, to participate in his work in the parts of the world where God has placed us.

We are both called and sent. We are both becoming and participating. That is always the case.

Becoming is about bringing **ourselves** into greater **alignment** with God’s design and intention.

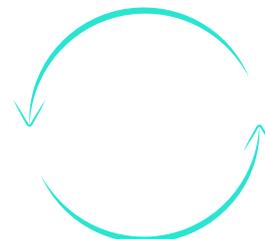
Participating is about bringing **our context** into greater **alignment** with God’s design and intention.

Our firm belief, as you will see below, is that these two things are interdependent. They are not in competition with one another.

We become who God made us to be as we participate in the story of God. We participate faithfully in God’s story as we more fully become who God made us to be.

Seed has been working on a new approach to formation that is grounded in this understanding of purpose.

BECOMING



PARTICIPATING

We call this approach Redemptive Design.

Redemptive Design – Beyond learning



Many of the core approaches to formation in churches focus on growing our knowledge of God and His word. We spend our time preaching & teaching or engaging in bible study. These are fundamentally good things, yet the assumption behind these approaches seems to be that the more we learn, the more we grow.

However, if the purpose of our lives has to do with becoming and participating, and if the goal of our faith is a way of life, not merely a way of thinking, then our formation must reflect that reality. Our formation needs to move beyond knowledge acquisition to something more embodied and more contextualised.

Redemptive Design is a pathway for formation that intentionally moves beyond a 'learning' framework to a 'design' framework.

Through Redemptive Design we seek to form people's faith and identity, at the same time as helping them explore how they can be a redemptive influence in the contexts where God has placed them.

In Redemptive Design, learning is vital as a means for forming both our identity and our understanding of the world in which we live. However, learning is a tool for helping people become who God made them to be and to participate in God's world – to discover and step into their place in God's story as it unfolds in this world.



GRANT'S STORY

Grant used to be the lead designer at the Sydney theatre company. He was at the absolute top of his game, but he was discontent. His job lacked meaning. Grant wanted to be a fashion photographer and felt a sense of prompting from God to be in the fashion industry.

As a follower of Jesus, Grant felt there were only two options available to him:

1. Step into the industry and be forced to do things that compromised his beliefs and values, or
2. Stay out of the industry, keep his conscience clear, but ignore the sense of call he had to the industry.

Sadly, Grant feared being marginalised by people both within the fashion industry, and within the church.

The church had never presented Grant with a viable third option, where he could confidently follow Jesus into the fashion industry and be a redemptive influence there. The very people who should be supporting him were holding him back.

Grant has since started to do some work in the industry. Imagine the potential for impact on our society if Grant could play a role in redefining what our culture's definition of beauty is, by giving our culture a glimpse of what God's conception of beauty is.

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 place in the world. From that foundation, we help people and organisations discover their own purpose, within God’s purposes for the world (their place within God’s story), by exploring two key concepts:

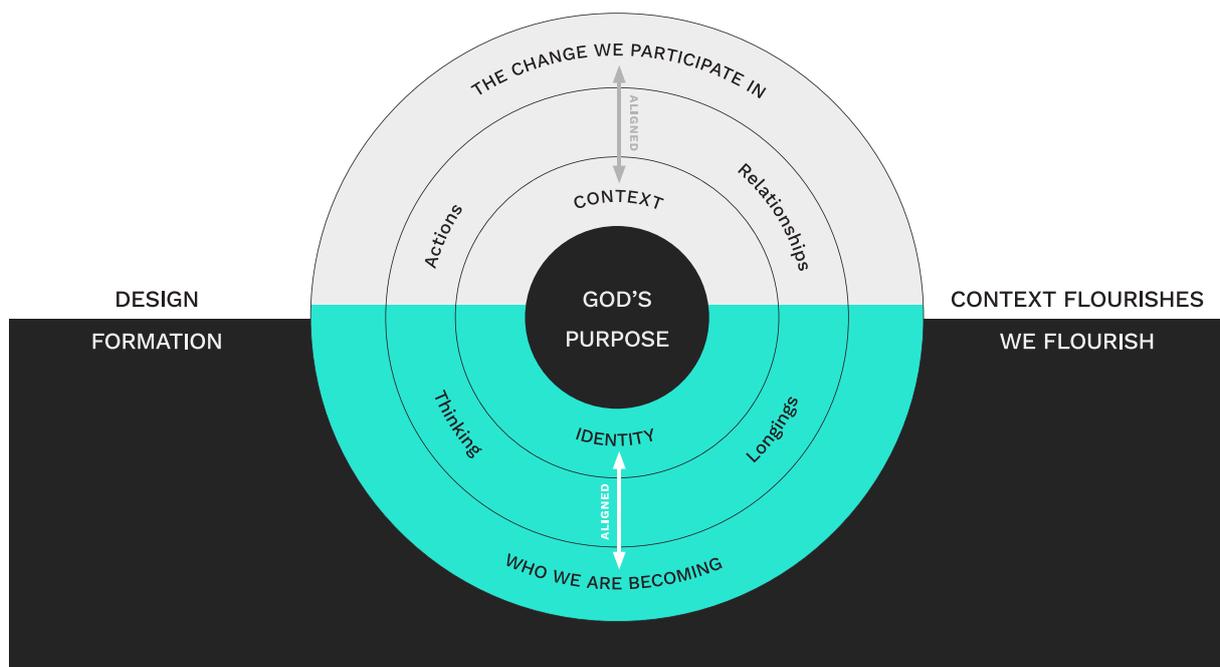
1. **Identity** Who am I? Who has God created me/us to be? (i.e. BECOMING)
2. **Context** Where has God placed me/ us? What is God’s design/intention for that place? (i.e. PARTICIPATING)

The process then flows into seeking to align both ourselves and our context with what God has done and is doing by his grace.

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.

We also need to recognise that this process of personal alignment doesn’t take place 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.

Throughout the process, our energy and focus are drawn to God’s purpose as the foundation. We understand God’s purpose primarily through



Foundations of Redemptive Design *Continued*



God's revelation to us in and through Jesus. 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 God at work in us and through us, so it is about discernment and faithfulness.

Out of that foundation we then seek to be faithful in the way we live. 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.



Distinctives of Redemptive Design



CURRENT APPROACHES

Removed from context
Focus on helping people lead within church, without helping them address the particular challenges of their daily lives.

Knowledge based
Focus on truth and right belief. The assumption is that increased knowledge will lead to right behaviour, closeness to God and effective mission.

Defensive
Emphasis on righteousness/ holiness sometimes unintentionally leads to excessive condemning and critiquing of culture.

Compartmentalised
Sometimes prioritise either evangelism or justice, putting them in competition with one another.

REDEMPTIVE DESIGN

→ **In context**
From the start we do formation at the place where you and your faith connect with the world. Brings the biblical story to bear on the questions your context is asking.

→ **Embodied**
Values knowledge but helps translate beliefs into tangible expressions that allow others to experience the way of Jesus. Connects people with their ideas. Expresses value not just truth.

→ **Constructive**
Focuses on creating tangible alternatives to current issues. Focused on creating what God is for, not naming what God is against.

→ **Integrated**
Connects our efforts for redemptive impact with our efforts to witness, putting them together in a whole-of-life approach.

An invitation to co-create



Our hope and prayer for Redemptive Design is that it will tangibly shift the posture of Christians to the world around them and enable them to become a redemptive influence in their own context.

In his book *Culture Making*, Andy Crouch highlights the tendency that Christians have to condemn and critique culture¹. When condemnation and critique are our only, or even dominant posture, to the culture around us, we place ourselves in a position of superiority over our culture.

By contrast, if we see ourselves as participating in the story of God, then the world around us is not a problem we need to fix, or an enemy we need to defeat. It is the backdrop for God's story of redemption and renewal. We find our place and our purpose within this story.

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 be co-creators with God.

This posture is urgently needed right now. While we Christians continue to have conversations about 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.

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.

In order to co-create, we need to take our knowledge and turn it into something.

Ideas don't change the world, ideas that turn into something change the world.

Through Redemptive Design, we're committed to helping people work through what faith looks like when it moves from being a belief system into an embodied reality in the particular contexts where God has placed them.

We want to explore that for the more traditionally accepted sectors for Christian work like education, health and justice. We also want to explore it in the world of fashion, or finance, or property, or architecture.

We want to help you, in your own context, create tangible expressions of your faith that help people touch, taste, see or experience what life with Jesus is like.

Pathway Builders



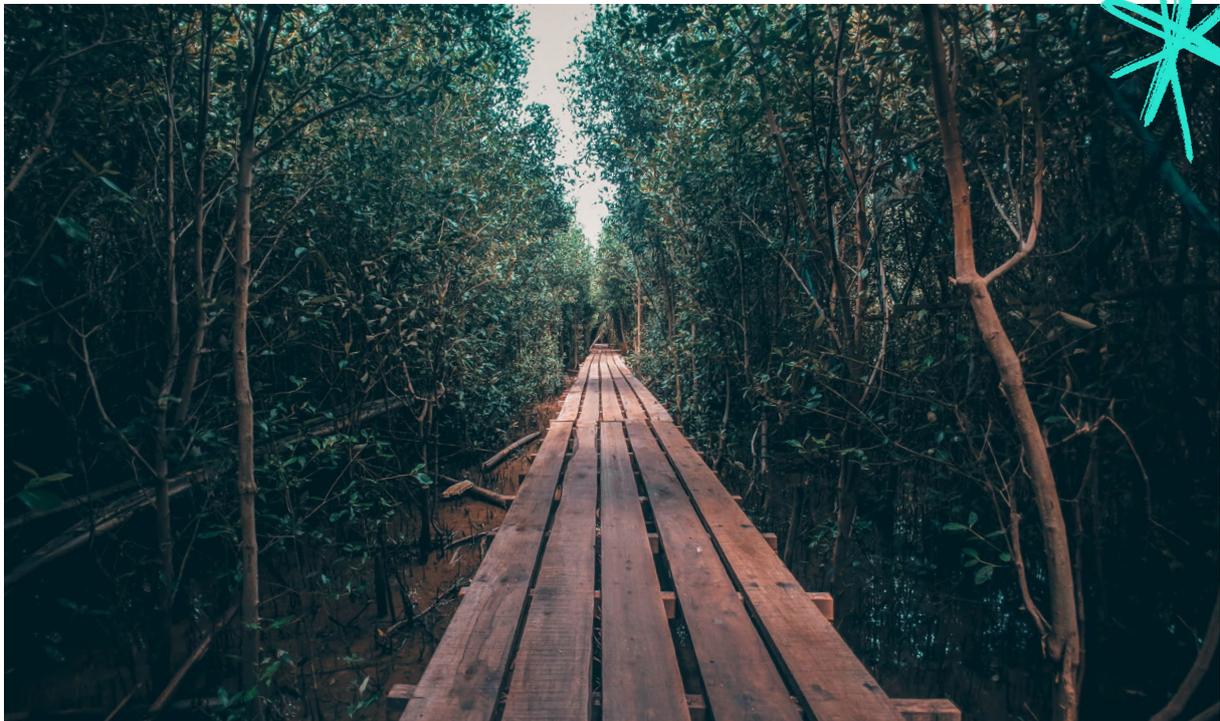
This is far from easy!

Every time we step into the world, seeking to faithfully align ourselves with God's story, we encounter a society shaped by a multitude of stories that are very different to the Christian story. This clash of stories can leave us feeling discouraged, disillusioned and disheartened.

It can feel like walking into a muddy swamp. There is no obvious path. It's easy to feel stuck, overwhelmed, weighed down, even endangered.

However, if a swamp has a pathway through, it becomes a far less scary or painful place. A swamp with a pathway through it can even be seen as a place of beauty.

Redemptive Design is our pathway through the swamp.



Looking Forward



Our vision for Redemptive Design is that it enables more people to engage their own community, workplace or industry in creative ways.

Through Redemptive Design we long to see more effective engagement by believers in society. We believe effective engagement should result in three things:

1. **Growth of the changemaker**
As they more fully step into their God-given identity, develop a sense of meaning, clarity of purpose, and alignment of their beliefs, longings and actions
2. **Redemptive impact**
As the changemaker's context experiences the way of Jesus
3. **Witness**
As people in the changemaker's context encounter the person of Jesus

Our vision is that Redemptive Design will help catalyse a movement of Christians bearing witness to Jesus at the forefront of redemptive change in society.

In practical terms, over the next 10 years, we see Redemptive Design utilised globally as an open-source framework for discipleship and formation. Alongside that, we're seeking to build a global network of changemaker communities, organised around the practise of Redemptive Design.

Ultimately, our hope and prayer is that it would be used by God to enable followers of Jesus to step into society with a humble confidence and enable them to embody the beauty and grace of God in the midst of a broken world.

We would love for you to [join our community](#) and work with us to make this vision a reality.

Redemptive Design is for you



We believe that every follower of Jesus is called to be a redemptive influence. We believe that is true for you in the context where God has placed you.

To what extent does your life help people taste and see what Jesus is like?

Does the way of Jesus flow out of you in the everydayness of life?

Is Jesus evident in your words and your actions, but also the things you create in this world?

When you see brokenness, are you able to imagine a different possible future? And invite people to join you in bringing it to life?

If you were unsure about your answers to any of those questions, then we would love for you to use Redemptive Design as a framework for investing in your own journey of formation.

Your community, your workplace, the context where God has placed you, is a canvas where God invites you to co-create. Will you accept the invitation?

For more information on Redemptive Design, including case studies and tools that will help you apply it in your own context, visit www.seed.org.au/redemptive-design

If you want support to utilise Redemptive Design in your organisation or church, visit www.seed.org.au/consulting

¹Crouch, A. Culture Making: Recovering our Creative Calling, Intervarsity Press, 2008

