

CORNERSTONE 2040

A Pastoral Vision for a Christ-Centered Future

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Preface

This work began with a much simpler purpose than the one it eventually became. After more than thirty years of serving as pastor of Cornerstone Fellowship Church, I realized it was time to think intentionally about the future. A friend of mine who had experience helping churches develop strategic plans graciously shared an outline she had used in that work. It was practical, thoughtful, and exactly the kind of framework I needed to begin organizing my own thinking. My original goal was straightforward: to leave behind a practical plan that would help future pastors and leaders faithfully navigate the years ahead.

That was the plan.

It didn't take long for me to realize that something was missing.

A church is not ultimately sustained by strategic planning. It is sustained by faithfully following Jesus Christ.

As I continued writing, the conversation kept returning to Him. Every subject I explored—leadership, worship, prayer, discipleship, generosity, community, and mission—led me back to the same place. What began as a strategic plan slowly became something much deeper. It became a reflection on the kind of people Christ is calling us to become and the kind of church He is building.

Somewhere along the way, I stopped writing primarily about the future of Cornerstone and found myself writing about the lifelong journey of following Jesus.

I believe that's exactly where I was supposed to arrive.

While these pages were written with the Cornerstone family in mind, they are ultimately about Christ. They are an invitation to treasure Him above every preference, remain with Him through every season of life, and joyfully join Him in the work He is already doing.

If you are part of the Cornerstone family, my prayer is that this work will help preserve the Christ-centered identity that has shaped us from the beginning. If you are reading it from another congregation or another place in your own journey, I hope these pages encourage you to know Christ more deeply, love Him more fully, and follow Him more faithfully.

By the time you reach the final page, I hope you are thinking less about Cornerstone and certainly less about me, and much more about Jesus. If this work helps you follow Him more faithfully and join Him more fully in His mission, then it will have fulfilled its purpose.

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CHAPTER ONE

A Steward's Declaration

*“Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain.”
— Psalm 127:1, NIV*

Thirty years is a long time when you have lived every day of it. When Cornerstone Fellowship Church began, we could not see the people who would come through our doors, the children who would grow up among us, or the difficult seasons we would face together. We simply started walking, and the Lord has been faithful.

We have known joy and sorrow, growth and struggle, abundance and uncertainty. We have worshiped, laughed, cried, and occasionally gotten on one another's nerves. That is what families do. Yet we are still here, and more importantly, Christ is still here.

None of this happened because we possessed unusual wisdom or could anticipate every turn. The Lord provided people, opened doors, corrected us, and carried us when our strength was insufficient. Our history is not a record of human certainty. It is a testimony to divine faithfulness.

I want to be careful with that statement. Jesus does not belong to Cornerstone.

Cornerstone belongs to Jesus.

This Church Belongs to Christ

Cornerstone Fellowship Church does not belong to its pastor, founding members, deacons, teachers, musicians, or ministry leaders. We honor those who have prayed, sacrificed, given, and served faithfully, but the church does not belong to any of us.

Jesus purchased His Church with His blood. He is its Head, Chief Shepherd, and Cornerstone. If the church belongs to Christ, we are not owners. We are stewards.

An owner does what he wants with what belongs to him. A steward cares for what belongs to another and uses it according to the owner's desires. For a season, Christ entrusts His people, resources, ministries, and opportunities to pastors and faithful servants. We preach, teach, lead, plan, and care for people, but none of it is ours.

Stewardship therefore reaches beyond finances. We steward doctrine by teaching it faithfully, relationships by treating people with dignity, influence by using it to serve, and opportunity by responding when Christ opens a door. We also steward the culture future generations will inherit. Every decision says something about what we believe belongs at the center.

That realization changes the way we hold everything.

Why Write This Now?

Why think about Cornerstone in 2040 when we have enough to address today? Because thirty years has taught us that faithfulness cannot be assumed.

Every generation must decide whether it will follow Jesus, learn Scripture, and obey Christ in its own circumstances. Every generation can also forget. We may preserve a ministry after its purpose has disappeared

or confuse a familiar method with the mission. A church can remember its traditions and forget its Savior.

Methods that served us well may not serve the next generation in the same way. Faithfulness does not require future leaders to reproduce every schedule, program, or preference. It requires them to hold tightly to Christ, Scripture, discipleship, love, and mission while exercising wisdom in their own time.

This manuscript is not an attempt to control Cornerstone's future. The world will change. Buildings will age, technology will advance, methods will shift, pastors will come and go, and people may forget our names. That is all right. Jesus Christ remains the same.

Our purpose is to help future leaders understand who we have learned we must be. We want to pass on the convictions the Lord has formed through both joyful and difficult lessons—not our personalities, preferences, or a museum of good memories, but faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

Our Desire

Our desire is not merely that Cornerstone survives. We want this church to flourish in faithfulness.

We want children not yet born to enter this fellowship, discover the beauty of Jesus, hear the Gospel clearly, be loved deeply, and learn Scripture. We want them to discover their gifts, serve others, endure hardship, repent when they stumble, and keep walking with Christ. We want them to become mature disciples who help others follow Jesus—even if they never know our names.

We want Cornerstone to be more than a building they visit. We want it to be a spiritual family in which truth is spoken with love, prayer is a first

response, service is normal, and every generation helps another follow Jesus.

This work was never about us. It succeeds when people remember Jesus, even if they forget us.

What We Are Praying For

We pray that future pastors will love Christ more than position and that every leader will understand authority as a call to serve. We pray that truth will never be sacrificed for popularity and that love will never be sacrificed in the name of being right.

We pray that children will know following Jesus as life's greatest privilege and that members will understand discipleship as more than attending church. A disciple listens, trusts, obeys, and returns to Christ after stumbling. We are not trying to manufacture perfect people. We desire faithful people who keep walking with Jesus.

Our Commitment

Every pastor serves for a season. Every generation eventually places into other hands what was once placed into theirs. The question is whether we will give them something worth receiving.

With gratitude for those who laid the foundation and confidence in the Lord who sustained us, we recommit ourselves to Cornerstone's stewardship. We will treasure Christ, trust His Word, love people, tell the truth, serve generously, make disciples, and develop leaders. We will hold our titles loosely and our calling tightly, preparing those behind us to go farther than we have gone.

When our season is over, we will open our hands. Cornerstone belonged to Jesus thirty years ago. It belongs to Him today. It will belong to Him in 2040 and beyond.

We are not owners. We are stewards. May we be found faithful until He comes, for His glory alone.



CHAPTER TWO

The Cornerstone Identity

“You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood...”
1 Peter 2:5, NIV

Every church has an identity. Sometimes it is carefully defined; sometimes it develops as people worship, serve, struggle, and grow together. Over time, certain convictions and ways of relating become normal.

Cornerstone has a distinct story and personality, but our identity cannot rest upon a pastor, worship style, favorite ministry, or shared history. Those things help tell our story, but they cannot carry the weight of who we are.

Our identity is found in Jesus Christ.

Cornerstone Fellowship Church is a spiritual family of passionate followers of Jesus, redeemed by God's grace, united by the Gospel, and empowered by the Holy Spirit for God's glory. We come from different families, experiences, backgrounds, and personalities, yet we belong to one another because we first belong to Him. Jesus Christ is our Cornerstone. That is more than our name. It is who we are.

Christ Is Our Treasure

I love Cornerstone's fellowship, worship, laughter, and the moments when someone begins to understand God's Word. But it is possible to love church and lose sight of Christ. Songs, preaching, programs, relationships,

and memories are good gifts; the danger comes when the gifts become more precious than the Giver.

Jesus is our treasure. We rejoice in His Cross and resurrection, depend upon Him as Savior and King, and await His return. The Gospel is not merely the message that saved us years ago. It is the good news in which we live every day.

Christ remains our hope when worship is joyful and when life is painful, when the church is growing and when ministry is difficult. He is not one value among many. Every other value receives its meaning from Him.

We preach Christ because there is no better message, worship Him because no one is more worthy, and obey Him because we trust Him.

At the center is Christ.

Always Christ.

God's Word Is Our Foundation

Because Jesus is our Cornerstone, we take seriously the Word He has given us. We believe Scripture is the inspired, authoritative, and sufficient Word of God. Through it, God reveals Himself, exposes our sin, confronts our thinking, points us to Christ, and equips us for faithful living.

Scripture must shape our preaching, teaching, leadership, ministries, and decisions. It must also shape our marriages, money, relationships, attitudes, and the way we treat people when nobody from church is watching.

This means we do not use Scripture merely to confirm what we already prefer. We allow it to correct us. We study it carefully, teach it in context, and submit our personal opinions to its authority. Truth is not

always comfortable, but it is always necessary for a church that wants to remain faithful.

Culture and popular opinion will change. If we build around every shifting idea, we will spend our lives moving the furniture. God has spoken. His Word is our foundation.

We Are Disciples

A disciple is a follower of Jesus Christ. Discipleship is not a class, program, certificate, or accumulation of biblical information. Those things may help us, but discipleship is a life.

It is the lifelong process of hearing God's Word, believing Him, obeying Him, and becoming more like Jesus. Therefore, discipleship reaches into how we worship, work, parent, forgive, serve, give, speak, and respond when life hurts or we do not get our way.

Disciples do not mature in a straight line. We pass through seasons of growth, waiting, service, suffering, and renewed obedience. We stumble, repent, receive grace, and continue walking. Maturity is not the absence of struggle; it is a growing willingness to remain with Christ through every season.

Church activity can fool us. We may know when to stand, clap, and say amen while resisting Christ in daily life. Spiritual maturity is not measured only by what we know, but by whether we are learning to obey the One we know.

We Are Family

God did not save us to live the Christian life alone. He joined us to a body and gave us brothers and sisters in Christ.

Family life is not always easy. We disagree, misunderstand, and sometimes hurt one another. Yet relationships become one of God's primary places of formation. At Cornerstone, we cultivate love, encouragement, accountability, forgiveness, hospitality, and mutual care. We celebrate and grieve together, bear burdens, and lovingly challenge one another.

Real community requires patience and the humility to admit when we are wrong. It means loving people who are still growing while remembering that we are still growing too. Unity is not pretending differences do not exist. It is choosing to handle them beneath the lordship of Christ.

No one walks alone—not because the church will meet every need perfectly, but because Christ has joined us together and often uses His people to shape His people.

We Are Servants

Jesus, who deserved to be served by everyone, came serving. We cannot follow Him while spending our lives waiting for others to serve us.

Service is not an occasional activity. God has given every believer gifts, abilities, resources, influence, and time for the good of others and His glory. Some service is visible; much of it is known only to the person helped and the Lord. Both matter.

We serve our congregation, neighbors, and community, including people who may never join Cornerstone or repay us. We serve because Jesus served us. Compassion may open a door, but Christ transforms lives.

Service also protects us from becoming consumers who judge the church mainly by what it provides for us. The question of a disciple is not

only, “What did I receive?” but also, “Whom did Christ give me an opportunity to serve?”

We Are Generous

Everything we possess was entrusted to us by God. Our time, abilities, influence, opportunities, and resources belong beneath the lordship of Christ. Generosity is therefore more than what we place in an offering. It is a life lived with open hands.

We give to strengthen the Church, advance the Gospel, and care for people in need. Our desire is not merely to fund ministry but to become generous people.

Generosity is expressed through money, but also through attention, hospitality, encouragement, knowledge, and time. Open hands reveal trust in the God who first gave Himself to us.

We Are Multipliers

The Christian life was never intended to terminate with us. Someone taught, prayed for, encouraged, or patiently walked with us. Now it is our turn.

Healthy disciples begin influencing others. Parents teach children, older believers encourage younger ones, friends walk with friends, and teachers open Scripture. Disciples become disciple-makers; servants mature into leaders; leaders develop other leaders.

Multiplication usually begins quietly. A conversation continues after Bible study. Someone invites another believer to pray. A mature saint shares wisdom earned through hardship. These ordinary relationships become the pathways through which faith travels from one generation to another.

This is why we invest in people at every stage—from seekers and new believers to mature servants and emerging leaders. We especially invest in children, students, and young adults. They are not merely the church of tomorrow. They are worshiping, learning, serving, and growing as Christ's Church today.

Success is not measured by how many people gather around one gifted leader, but by how many disciples are equipped to help someone else follow Jesus.

This identity must be more than language on a page. It should be recognizable in our priorities, budgets, calendars, leadership practices, and relationships. What we repeatedly do will teach future generations what we truly value.

This Is Who We Are

Cornerstone Fellowship Church is a Christ-centered family of disciple-making disciples who treasure Jesus, stand upon God's Word, pursue joyful obedience, love one another, serve generously, and raise faithful leaders for God's glory.

We are not competing with another church or measuring our worth by attendance, buildings, budgets, or visibility. We want to know Christ, trust Him, follow Him, and become increasingly translucent so others see less of us and more of Him. Then we want to help those walking behind us do the same.

At the center is Christ.

Always Christ.

THE CORNERSTONE IDENTITY

Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of everything we do.



CHRIST IS OUR ULTIMATE TREASURE.

Jesus is not just one value among many;
He is the center of our worship and hope.



GOD'S WORD IS OUR FOUNDATION.

We submit our lives to the authority of
Scripture rather than shifting cultural opinions.



WE ARE A FAMILY OF DISCIPLES.

Discipleship is a lifelong process of becoming like
Jesus alongside our spiritual brothers and sisters.



WE SERVE AND MULTIPLY OTHERS.

We use our gifts to serve neighbors and equip
the next generation to follow Christ.

CHAPTER THREE

Our Mission

“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

John 20:21, NIV

Why does Cornerstone Fellowship Church exist?

Churches do many good and necessary things: worship, preach, teach, pray, counsel, feed people, visit the sick, strengthen families, baptize believers, and attend more meetings than we imagined possible. Yet activity alone does not define our mission. A church can be busy and still lose sight of why Jesus left us here.

Cornerstone exists to glorify God by helping people know, trust, and follow Jesus Christ—and faithfully lead others to do the same. Ministries and methods will change, but the mission must remain clear.

A simple question can guide our decisions: Does this help people take their next faithful step with Christ? Not every ministry will look alike or produce immediate results, but everything should serve the mission Christ has given His Church.

We are not here merely to maintain an institution. We are here to make disciples.

We Invite People to Christ

Every disciple's journey begins with God's grace. Christ meets us in our need and calls us to Himself.

People come to Cornerstone from many places. Some are searching, skeptical, wounded, disappointed, angry, or simply curious. Others enter because someone cared enough to say, “Come go with me.” We welcome them because every person bears God's image and is someone for whom Christ died.

Welcome does not mean avoiding truth or pretending every belief is equally faithful. It means receiving people with dignity, listening to their stories, and making room for them to encounter Jesus without requiring them to become polished before they enter.

Our first responsibility is not to convince people that Cornerstone is wonderful. It is to introduce them to Jesus Christ. He is the Savior we proclaim, the hope we offer, and the life we have found.

At the center is Christ.

Always Christ.

We Form Disciples, Not Spectators

Coming to Christ begins the journey. Attendance matters because gathering with God's people matters, but sitting in a worship service does not automatically produce maturity any more than sitting in a garage makes someone a Buick. Old joke. Still true.

Making disciples means helping people hear God's Word, believe Him, pray, worship, live in biblical community, pursue holiness, discover their gifts, and obey Jesus. Biblical knowledge matters, but information must become transformation. The Word must travel from the page into the person, shaping how we think, speak, forgive, spend, love, serve, and respond when life does not go our way.

This formation takes time. New believers need patient instruction. Growing believers need relationships that encourage both grace and accountability. Mature disciples need opportunities to serve, lead, and pour into others. The church must create a clear path without pretending that spiritual growth can be completed like a course.

Our aim is not merely informed minds. It is transformed lives.

We Serve as Jesus Served

Jesus never separated compassion from truth. He proclaimed the Kingdom, fed hungry people, touched those others avoided, confronted sin, and wept with grieving friends.

We want that same spirit at Cornerstone. We feed the hungry, comfort the hurting, encourage the lonely, counsel the discouraged, and strengthen families because love must become visible. Compassion is not a substitute for the Gospel, but neither should we tell a hungry person Jesus loves them while refusing to share the sandwich in our hand.

We serve people, not projects. Those receiving care are never props for publicity or numbers for a report. They are neighbors to be treated with the same dignity we would desire in our own season of need.

We serve because Christ served us. Compassion may open doors; Christ transforms lives.

We Develop Disciple-Makers

As disciples mature, they begin looking beyond themselves. A parent considers a child's spiritual life. An older believer encourages a younger one. A friend notices another friend's questions. Someone realizes, "A person helped me. Perhaps I can help someone else."

That is how multiplication begins. Parents disciple children, friends walk with friends, and leaders develop future leaders. This work is not reserved for pastors or people with titles. Every healthy disciple should eventually ask, Who am I helping follow Jesus?

Disciple-making does not always require a formal program. It may happen over a meal, during a hospital visit, in a weekly telephone call, or through a faithful friendship. What matters is the intentional sharing of truth, life, prayer, and obedience.

Even difficult experiences may become places from which we encourage others. God wastes nothing. Our prayer is that every Cornerstone generation will help form another generation of faithful followers of Christ.

We Live Sent

Ministry does not happen mainly inside the church building. After worship, we scatter into homes, workplaces, classrooms, neighborhoods, stores, hospitals, and ordinary conversations. Those places matter.

Jesus sends every believer. We carry His presence and message into daily life, representing Him in how we speak, work, forgive, serve, and love. When God opens the door, we clearly tell people about the hope we have found in Christ.

Our homes are places of mission. Our workplaces and neighborhoods are places of mission. Even interruptions may become holy opportunities when we remain attentive to what Christ is doing around us.

We do not merely attend church. We are Christ's Church.

Our Mission

Cornerstone Fellowship Church exists to glorify God by leading people to believe in Jesus, grow as obedient disciples, and multiply disciple-makers who represent Him faithfully in every sphere of life.

This mission must guide our ministries, leadership development, stewardship, and preparation of future generations. Wise leaders may change methods that no longer serve the mission, but they must not lose the mission.

Help people believe in Jesus. Help believers grow as disciples. Help disciples become disciple-makers. Wherever Christ sends us, represent Him faithfully.

At the center is Christ.

Always Christ.

Our Mission: The Journey of a Disciple

**Invite People
to Christ**

**Form Disciples,
Not Spectators**

**Develop
Disciple-Makers**

**Live Sent in
Every Sphere**



We welcome everyone with dignity, introducing them to Jesus as the center of all we do.

True maturity happens when biblical information leads to a transformed life.

Every healthy disciple eventually asks: "Who am I helping follow Jesus?"

We represent Christ in our homes, workplaces, and neighborhoods—not just inside the building.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Our Vision

*“He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”
Philippians 1:6, NIV*

After thirty years of pastoring Cornerstone, I often wonder what this church will become. Who will lead ten or twenty years from now? What will worship look like? What methods and technologies will future generations use?

I do not know, and vision is not the ability to predict every detail. It is not Christian fortune-telling with a Bible verse attached. God alone knows the full measure of His purpose. Yet He calls us to walk by faith, labor with expectation, and prepare for the work He intends to accomplish.

Our vision is not human ambition. We are not imagining the largest crowd or most impressive ministry we can build. We are asking a more important question: What kind of people is Christ forming us to become?

We believe God is shaping Cornerstone into a Christ-centered community that reflects His Son, proclaims His Gospel, and develops generations of disciples who joyfully obey Him. We cannot name every future ministry, but we know who must remain at the center.

At the center is Christ.

Always Christ.

We See a Church That Treasures Christ

A person can know much about Jesus without treasuring Jesus. Biblical knowledge, sound doctrine, church attendance, and religious language do not necessarily reveal what the heart loves.

We envision a church where truth about Christ leads to deeper affection for Christ. Jesus is not merely the subject of our preaching; He is the object of our affection. As He becomes more precious, preferences matter less, recognition loses its appeal, and possessions loosen their grip.

This does not mean living in permanent spiritual excitement. Emotions change. We will have days of joy and days of distraction, weariness, or struggle. Beneath them all, however, should grow a settled conviction: I have found my treasure in Christ.

Our success is not measured only by attendance or activity, but by whether Jesus is becoming increasingly precious to us.

We See a Church of Authentic Disciples

If discipleship is a life, its greatest evidence will not be found on Sunday morning alone. It will appear on Monday—in marriages and families, business decisions and finances, private habits and difficult conversations. God measures spirituality where life happens.

We envision husbands and wives living faithfully before Christ, parents teaching children, and children learning to know Jesus for themselves. We see integrity governing work, forgiveness replacing bitterness, neighbors receiving love, and holiness pursued with humility.

We obey because we believe Jesus. We trust His commands, wisdom, promises, and grace. Authentic disciples are not perfect people. They are people who keep learning, surrendering, repenting, receiving grace, and walking with Christ.

Cornerstone's greatest testimony will not be its buildings or programs. It will be the Christlike character of its people.

We See a Church That Walks Together

We need one another. Cornerstone should be a fellowship where no one is expected to walk alone. New believers are nurtured, families strengthened, older adults honored, children cherished, students challenged, and young adults equipped to follow Christ in their world.

We envision friendships deepening, differences being reconciled, burdens being shared, and prayer becoming natural because we know one another well. Hospitality means opening our homes, tables, and lives.

Relationships will become messy because church people are still people. We will say the wrong thing, misunderstand one another, and expose places where sanctification is still needed. But we do not run at the first sign of difficulty. We talk, listen, forgive, repent, and extend the grace we have received.

Biblical community is one way Christ forms His people. Sometimes the person who irritates us reveals something in us that still needs surrender. I do not particularly enjoy that truth either, but it remains true.

No one walks alone.

We See a Church That Serves with Extraordinary Compassion

We want Cornerstone to be known in its community—not merely for its name, building, preaching, music, or food, though we know something about food. We want people to know that Cornerstone loves people.

We envision a church that listens before speaking, serves without waiting to be asked, welcomes without partiality, and gives without

requiring recognition. We feed hungry people, comfort those who grieve, strengthen families, and offer hope to the discouraged.

Christian compassion also shares the Gospel with gentleness and conviction because it does not ignore anyone's deepest need for Christ. Jesus noticed people others passed, touched those others avoided, welcomed children, ate with sinners, and stopped for hurting people while on His way somewhere else.

We want neighbors to experience Christ's love through Cornerstone before entering our sanctuary. Then, when God opens the door, we tell them why: we love because Christ first loved us.

We See a Church That Raises Leaders

Leadership in Christ's Church does not begin with a title or empty position. It begins with discipleship. A believer learns to trust and obey Jesus, begins serving, helps someone else follow Christ, and gradually develops character, gifts, and influence. A leader emerges.

Not every mature believer will hold office, but mature disciples influence others. They serve, encourage, teach, mentor, and lead because the life of Christ in them is no longer turned inward.

Leadership development cannot wait until a vacancy appears. By then, we are late. Every ministry should cultivate future servants and shepherds: children growing into disciples, disciples becoming disciple-makers, and servant leaders investing in those behind them.

We do not want to spend the future desperately filling positions. We want to spend the present developing people.

We See a Church That Extends Christ's Kingdom

Cornerstone has never existed only for Cornerstone. Christ is building His Church around the world, and we have the privilege of joining His work.

We envision strengthening churches, encouraging pastors, supporting missionaries, and partnering with ministries that proclaim the Gospel and serve people faithfully. Some seeds we plant may bear fruit we never see. That is all right. Someone planted seeds that became Cornerstone; we can plant for others.

Whether across the street or across the world, we rejoice whenever Christ is glorified. His Kingdom does not need our name printed upon everything we touch.

We See a Church That Outlives Its Leaders

This vision is personal for me. I have loved, prayed for, worried about, and rejoiced over Cornerstone for thirty years. Yet I am a steward. My assignment has a beginning and an end, as does every pastor's. Jesus is Cornerstone's final Leader.

We envision future generations receiving a culture rooted in Scripture, centered upon Christ, committed to discipleship, and devoted to God's glory. We hope they change methods that no longer work, use tools we have not imagined, and develop ministries that would never occur to us. We pray they follow Christ courageously in their world.

But we pray they never lose Jesus.

If they treasure Christ, stand upon His Word, love one another, serve generously, make disciples, and prepare another generation, our stewardship will have succeeded—not because they preserved us, but because they remained faithful to Him.

Chapter 4: Our Vision

We cannot see every detail of the future. We know the One who is already there. He began this work, has sustained it, and will carry it toward completion.

At the center is Christ.

Always Christ.



CHAPTER FIVE

Our Core Values

*“Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”
Colossians 3:17, NIV*

Every church has values. The question is whether its true values are printed in a document or practiced by its people. Real values appear in what we protect, celebrate, fund, and sacrifice. They guide us when decisions are difficult and when good opportunities compete for limited time, money, or attention. Cornerstone's core values are biblical convictions intended to govern how we worship, lead, serve, decide, and live together. They are our attempt to express what matters to Christ.

We Treasure Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the center of everything. He is not merely the Church's Founder or a name in our songs. He is our Savior, Shepherd, King, Head, and Cornerstone. Every ministry should help people know, love, trust, and follow Him.

This value becomes real when Christ's purpose competes with our preferences, obedience costs comfort, or service brings no recognition. A treasure is something we consider worth more than something else. We treasure Christ above our pride, plans, reputation, and comfort.

At the center is Christ.

Always Christ.

We Submit to God's Word

After more than forty years of preaching, I still discover more in Scripture. Familiar passages arrest my attention, open new doors, and challenge me again. That is the Bible.

We believe Scripture is inspired, trustworthy, authoritative, and sufficient. It is our final authority for faith and life. We measure our beliefs, ministries, and priorities against God's Word rather than culture or personal preference.

Not every decision has a verse attached. Scripture does not prescribe the hour of worship or which technology to purchase, but it shapes the wisdom and character with which we decide. When Scripture speaks clearly, our responsibility is to listen.

The question is not merely, What do I think? or What is everyone else doing? We ask, What has God said? We remain under the Word, allowing it to comfort, confront, confirm, and correct us.

We Believe Before We Obey

Biblical obedience begins deeper than a list of rules. It begins with belief.

We do not obey to earn Christ's love. We obey because we believe Him. We believe He is who He says He is, His Word is true, His promises are trustworthy, His commands are good, and His grace is sufficient. Because we believe, we trust; because we trust, we obey.

Our disobedience often exposes a question of belief. Do I trust His wisdom more than mine? Do I believe He sees what I cannot? We rarely announce that we do not trust Jesus. We simply do what we want and call it something else.

Obedience tells the truth about trust. It is not a miserable obligation but an act of worship that declares Jesus worthy of our confidence.

We Stay with Christ

Following Jesus is not a trial arrangement we reconsider when life becomes difficult. It is a lifelong relationship in which we learn to remain through every season.

When life is joyful, stay with Christ. When grief enters, prayers seem unanswered, or obedience becomes costly, stay. We remain not because it is always easy, but because Peter's question remains ours: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Peter did not understand everything. He knew whom he was staying with.

Transformation is not manufactured by trying harder to look Christian. It is Christ's gracious work in those who abide in Him. Faithfulness is refusing to leave Christ when difficulty comes.

Stay with Christ.

We Grow Together

People are complicated. I am one of them, and so are you. That knowledge should help us extend grace.

God joins us to a body where brothers and sisters encourage, challenge, pray for, and sometimes reveal how much sanctification we still need. We pursue relationships marked by truth, love, accountability, forgiveness, humility, and generosity.

Community requires intention. Someone must make the call, open the door, ask the second question after "I'm fine," and listen without immediately trying to fix everything. Sometimes love must also say, "My brother, my sister, you are wrong."

Healthy relationships require both truth and love. No one walks alone.

We Serve Generously

Jesus came not to be served but to serve. The One who deserved everything took a towel and washed feet, then told us to follow Him. Service cannot be beneath us.

We use our gifts, opportunities, and resources for the good of others and God's glory. We serve members, neighbors, strangers, and communities near and far—not only when service is convenient or visible. If Christ is glorified and people are helped, that is enough.

Generosity flows from understanding how generously Christ has treated us. We received grace we could not earn, mercy we did not deserve, and life purchased at a price we could not pay. Generous people reflect a generous Savior.

We Multiply Faithful Disciples

What Christ is doing in us should eventually reach someone else. Healthy disciples become disciple-makers; disciple-makers become servant leaders; and servant leaders develop others. This is not a corporate pipeline. It is spiritual life multiplying through relationships.

Someone likely helped you—a parent, teacher, pastor, friend, or mature believer who answered a question, prayed, corrected, encouraged, or lived close enough for you to see faithful discipleship.

Now ask: Who receives the benefit of what Christ has taught me? If every lesson, Scripture, and trial remains locked inside my life, something is lost.

We invest in children, students, adults, families, and future leaders because every generation needs a faithful witness. Our mission belongs to

the whole church: working together, we make disciples of Jesus through the love of Jesus Christ.

Values Must Live

We know these are our values by examining our lives. Do we treasure Christ, submit to Scripture, believe Jesus enough to obey, remain with Him, grow in community, serve generously, and help others follow Him?

These questions belong to every member and every leadership decision. Ministries and opportunities should be tested by whether they honor Christ, strengthen faith, cultivate community, demonstrate generosity, and make disciples. If they do, we move prayerfully. If they do not, we must ask why we are doing them.

Values are not what we print. Values are what we practice.

At the center is Christ.

Always Christ.

LIVING OUR VALUES: ALWAYS CHRIST

**AT THE CENTER
OF IT ALL IS
JESUS CHRIST.**

**TREASURE JESUS
CHRIST ABOVE ALL**

He is our Savior, King, and Cornerstone, worth more than our own pride or plans.

**SUBMIT TO AND
BELIEVE GOD'S WORD**

Scripture is our final authority, and our obedience flows from a deep trust in His promises.

**GROW TOGETHER
IN COMMUNITY**

We pursue relationships marked by grace, truth, and accountability because no one should walk alone.

**SERVE GENEROUSLY AND
MULTIPLY DISCIPLES**

We use our gifts to help others and invest in the next generation of faithful witnesses.

**STAY WITH
CHRIST THROUGH
EVERY SEASON**

Faithfulness means refusing to leave Him when life gets difficult or obedience becomes costly.

© NotebookLM

CHAPTER SIX

The Cornerstone Path

*"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
John 14:6, NIV*

The Christian life does not move in a straight line. We do not come to Christ, complete a few lessons, overcome every weakness, and steadily rise until a certificate announces that we have arrived.

Life with Christ has seasons. Sometimes growth seems visible, Scripture feels alive, prayer is rich, and obedience is clear. Other times we wait, struggle, serve, suffer, or do several of those at once. Through every season, Christ is transforming us into His image.

This lifelong journey with Christ is what Cornerstone calls the Cornerstone Path. It is not a ladder of spiritual achievement. It is a way of understanding faithful discipleship through changing seasons.

The Path Is Christ

The Path is not a program, curriculum, list of classes, or system by which we rank spiritual maturity. Curriculum can help us understand it, but the Path is Christ.

Jesus did not merely say He would show us the way. He said, "I am the way." Christianity is not primarily a set of principles to master; it is relationship with a living Person. The Christian life is not a journey toward Christ as though He waits at the finish line. It is a journey with Christ.

He is our beginning and end, Way and Companion, Teacher and Strength, Shepherd and Hope. Therefore, the central question is not, “How far have I come compared with someone else?” Comparison produces pride or discouragement while turning our eyes away from Jesus.

A better question is: What does faithfulness to Christ look like in this season of my journey?

You Are Here

Most of us have stood before a large map searching for the marker that makes the rest of it useful: YOU ARE HERE. A map cannot guide us until we recognize where we are.

The same is true spiritually. We want every disciple to recognize the present season—not for ranking or comparison, but for honest response to Christ. You may be learning to believe Jesus, facing an area of long-resisted obedience, growing quietly, waiting, suffering, or receiving an opportunity to serve.

You are here, and Christ meets you here. We often wish we were somewhere else, want a trial to end, or compare our journey with another person's. But the question is not why your life does not look like theirs. It is: How is Christ inviting you to trust and obey Him here?

Belief Is the Beginning of Obedience

Discipleship begins with belief—not belief in ourselves, but in Jesus Christ. We believe His death is sufficient, His resurrection conquered death, His Word is true, His promises trustworthy, His commands good, and His grace sufficient.

Because we believe Him, we trust Him. Because we trust Him, we obey Him.

Many struggles with obedience reveal a struggle with belief. When I refuse to forgive, do I believe Jesus knows what He is asking? When I grip what He tells me to release, do I trust Him with what happens next? When I choose my way, have I decided my wisdom is better than His?

Our obedience does not earn God's love. We obey because the Cross has already revealed that love. Belief gives birth to obedience.

Growth Is Often Hidden

Spiritual growth can be frustrating because we cannot always see it. It resembles roots extending beneath the soil. People admire branches and fruit; nobody applauds roots. Yet the tree is being strengthened before evidence appears above ground.

Much of Christ's work happens where nobody sees it. We believe His Word, obey in a small matter, repent, forgive, wait, resist temptation, pray without feeling like it, and persevere. Day after day, Christ shapes us quietly and sometimes invisibly.

I understand this through my lifelong adventures with weight loss. You do the right thing for three days and step on the scale expecting a parade. The scale congratulates you by doing absolutely nothing. Still, something may be happening.

Most of life with Christ occurs on ordinary Tuesdays and Thursdays, not mountaintops. Consistency is key. Faithfulness in ordinary places gives Christ room to do extraordinary work.

Transformation Is Revealed

Then the season changes. A trial comes, disappointment knocks, temptation returns, someone hurts us, or an inconvenient opportunity to

serve appears. Such moments do not create character as much as reveal what Christ has been forming.

Will I trust, obey, forgive, serve, and stay?

Transformation Revealed is not another level on the Path. It is the gracious work of Christ becoming visible in daily life. Perhaps criticism once produced anger, but now you listen. Bitterness once ruled, but now you forgive. Fear once controlled your decisions, but now you obey. Suffering once made you run, but through tears and questions, you remain.

You may not notice the change at first, but Christ has been at work. Transformation is revealed along the way.

Stay with Christ

This is the heartbeat of the Cornerstone Path: Stay with Christ.

Jesus calls disciples to abide—not merely visit Him during trouble or admire Him from a religious distance. When we rejoice, grieve, understand, struggle, wait, or find obedience costly, we remain.

Peter did not tell Jesus he understood everything. He asked, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” Sometimes we do not understand the season, its length, or its purpose. But we know who Jesus is, so we stay.

Faithfulness is not the absence of difficulty. It is refusing to leave Christ when difficulty comes.

Everyone Is Walking the Path

No one has arrived—not the newest believer, oldest saint, pastor, teacher, missionary, or longtime servant. We are all walking with Christ.

Some believers have experience in seasons others are entering. A person who walked through grief can help someone whose loss is fresh. One who learned forgiveness can walk beside someone wrestling with bitterness. A generous believer can help another loosen a grip upon possessions.

That is discipleship. We do not compare journeys; we help one another walk. We reject pride and ask a better question: How can I help someone else walk faithfully with Christ?

This Is the Cornerstone Path

Hear Christ. Believe Him. Obey Him. Grow. Wait when He says wait. Trust through trials. Serve. Suffer faithfully. Watch transformation emerge. Lead when He calls, and help someone else walk with Him.

These are not levels. They are seasons and movements that repeat throughout life. We may serve while suffering or lead while Christ teaches us new obedience. The Path begins with the same marker for everyone: YOU ARE HERE.

Wherever here is, Christ is present. Listen, believe, trust, obey, and walk with Him. Then help someone else walk. This is how disciples are formed, churches remain faithful, and one generation prepares another.



No matter where we are, the invitation remains the same: Stay with Christ.

At the center is Christ.

Always Christ.

The Cornerstone Path: Walking With Christ

Discipleship is the act of staying with Christ exactly where you are today.

The Path is Jesus, Not a Program



Christianity is a relationship with a living Person, not a system of classes or spiritual rankings to master.

Trust Christ Exactly Where You Are



Stop comparing your journey to others; instead, ask how Jesus is inviting you to obey Him in your current season.

Spiritual Growth Is Often Hidden



Like roots beneath the soil, Christ often transforms your character quietly in the ordinary moments before the results become visible.

Stay With Him Through Every Season



Faithfulness isn't the absence of struggle, but the refusal to leave Jesus when life becomes difficult or confusing.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Fruit of the Path

*“This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”
John 15:8, NIV*

What Does a Mature Disciple Look Like?

Is maturity measured by years in church, Scripture knowledge, position, or knowing exactly when to say amen? Those things may reflect growth, but none guarantees it. A person can master church language while resisting Jesus where He calls for trust and obedience.

Jesus said a tree is known by its fruit. If the Path is Christ, its fruit is Christ becoming increasingly visible in us. This transformation is the Holy Spirit's work. We cannot manufacture Christlikeness, yet grace does not make us passive. We hear, believe, obey, and remain in Christ as the Spirit works within us.

The fruit of discipleship is not perfection but increasing resemblance to Jesus. Mature disciples have not arrived. They are becoming faithful, teachable, responsive, and willing to let Christ rule every part of life.

We Treasure Christ Above Ourselves

Mature disciples increasingly love Christ more than comfort, recognition, possessions, ambition, and preference. That becomes revealing when His will interrupts our plans or leads along a road we would not choose.

We treasure Jesus not only for what He gives, but for who He is: Savior, Shepherd, King, Wisdom, Righteousness, and Life. In Him we have not merely received blessings; we have been brought home to God.

As Christ becomes more precious, everything else finds its proper place. We enjoy gifts without worshipping them, hold plans without being controlled by them, and release preferences without losing peace. The mature disciple is learning to say, “Jesus, You are worth more.”

We Believe Before We Obey

Every act of obedience rests upon faith. We obey not to earn Christ's love but because we have already been loved. We follow even when a command is difficult or an outcome unclear because Jesus is trustworthy.

Obedience is faith made visible. When Christ tells us to forgive, give, wait, speak truth, love an enemy, or take an unexplained step, the deeper question is: Do I trust Him?

Mature disciples learn to answer yes—not perfectly, without questions, or always without tears, but yes. Faith gives birth to obedience, and obedience deepens faith as we discover again that Christ was trustworthy all along.

We Practice Lifelong Repentance

Repentance is not only the doorway into Christian life. It is the continuing posture of growing disciples. As Christ reveals more of Himself, His light exposes attitudes, motives, habits, and wounds we have excused or hidden.

This discovery may be painful, but it is grace. Jesus reveals what is broken not to shame us, but to heal and free us. Mature disciples become quicker to confess, apologize, repair what was damaged, and return to fellowship with God. Repentance says, “Lord, You are right, and I am coming Your way.”

A church that cannot repent cannot mature. A church whose people humbly confess, forgive, and keep turning toward Christ becomes a testimony to the Gospel's power.

We Become Increasingly Translucent

Discipleship is not self-improvement. It is Christ revealed.

John the Baptist said, “He must become greater; I must become less.” Christ does not erase our personalities or make us copies of one another. He redeems our gifts, heals what sin distorted, and brings every part beneath His lordship.

We use the word translucent for this process. Something translucent allows light to pass through it. As the Spirit works within us, Christ's light becomes clearer through the lives He gave us. Our thoughts reflect more truth, words carry more grace, reactions display more patience, and strength resembles surrender rather than control.

Pressure often reveals this change. Anybody appears patient when patience is not tested. When life squeezes us, what has formed within begins to emerge. Our deepest desire is not that people admire us, but that they encounter Jesus through us.

We Love Sacrificially

Christian love is more than warm feelings or niceness when convenient. The love of Jesus is cross-shaped. It tells truth and extends grace, listens patiently, confronts courageously, apologizes humbly, and forgives freely.

Sacrificial love may cost time, pride, money, convenience, or the right to have the last word. It bears burdens and remains present when pain cannot be quickly solved. We do not love by pretending sin does not matter, and we do not honor truth by treating people as though they do not matter.

The mature disciple increasingly asks, “What would love require of me here?” Then, by grace, acts upon the answer.

We Serve Joyfully

Service is not an interruption of Christian life. Jesus welcomed the overlooked, fed the hungry, washed feet, and gave His life for sinners. How can we follow Him while waiting for someone to notice us?

As disciples mature, the question changes from “Who sees me?” to “Who can I help?” Titles may identify responsibility, but they cannot create servants. Some service is visible; much is quiet—a meal prepared, child taught, grieving family called, need met, or weary believer carried in prayer. Heaven sees it all.

Joyful service does not mean every task is easy. It means gratitude has become deeper than inconvenience. Remembering what Christ did for us turns service into worship.

We Persevere Faithfully

Christian life includes joy and suffering. Neither defines us. Christ does.

Trials do not mean discipleship has stopped working. They often reveal what God formed beneath the surface. We do not deny pain or pretend loss does not hurt. We grieve, question, wait, and sometimes walk with trembling knees, but Jesus remains faithful, so we remain with Jesus.

Suffering may become one of the places Christ forms us most deeply. Pride weakens, prayer becomes honest, compassion grows, lesser treasures lose their grip, and His presence becomes more precious than easy answers.

We do not seek suffering or surrender to it. We stay with Christ, trusting Him to complete His work.

We Multiply Our Lives

Healthy fruit carries seed. It does not exist only for itself; it holds the possibility of another harvest. The same is true of mature disciples.

Someone prayed, taught, corrected, encouraged, or walked beside us. Now grace turns our attention toward others. Parents disciple children, older believers encourage younger ones, teachers open Scripture, friends strengthen friends, and leaders develop future leaders.

We do not reproduce our personalities or build personal followings. We help people hear, trust, obey, and stay with Jesus. Every disciple should eventually ask, “Who is walking behind me whom I can help follow Christ?”

The Measure of Maturity

Cornerstone does not measure maturity primarily by knowledge, position, age, influence, or title. We measure it by increasing Christlikeness.

Am I trusting and obeying Christ more readily? Am I quicker to repent? Am I loving sacrificially, serving without recognition, remaining faithful in hardship, and helping another person follow Jesus?

These questions do not create a ranking system. “You Are Here” is an invitation to honesty, not condemnation. Wherever we discover ourselves, Christ meets us and calls us forward.

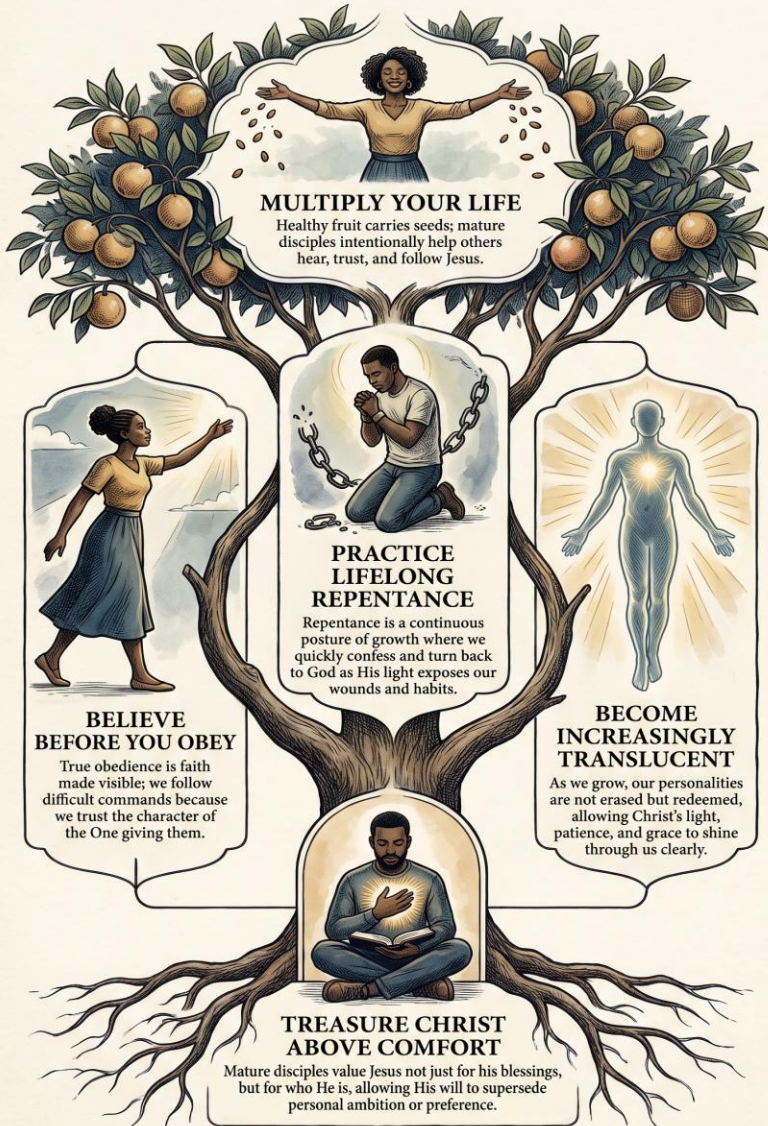
Fruit does not grow because branches stare at themselves and try harder. A branch bears fruit by remaining connected to the vine. We stay with Christ, receive His Word, depend upon His Spirit, obey His voice, and trust Him with growth.

This is the fruit we pray God produces in every believer: not perfect or impressive people, but faithful disciples through whom Jesus becomes increasingly visible. May the Father be glorified, the world see more of Christ through us, and every generation keep walking the Path together until He comes.

At the center is Christ.

Always Christ.

The Fruit of the Path



CHAPTER EIGHT

Released to Ministry

“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”

1 Corinthians 12:7, NIV

Ministry does not belong only to pastors. Scripture describes the Church as a body composed of many parts, each with a function. The eye sees, the ear hears, the hand grasps, and the foot gets us where we need to go. Different functions, one body.

Every follower of Jesus has been gifted by the Holy Spirit for the common good and the building of the Body. We will not serve in the same ways or places, but no believer is unnecessary or without purpose.

There are no spectators in the Body of Christ.

Every Believer Has a Ministry

Some people preach, teach, sing, or lead publicly. Others make calls, prepare meals, organize materials, give generously, pray faithfully, or sit quietly with someone who hurts. Which ministry matters more? That is the wrong question.

If the Spirit has gifted a believer and that gift is used faithfully for others and Christ's glory, the ministry matters. Visibility must never be confused with value. The person holding a microphone is not more important than the person praying in the back of the room.

There is a place for every member in the work of Christ—not merely because a volunteer schedule has openings, but because the Spirit has chosen to work through His people. If you belong to Christ, you have been called to serve.

The Holy Spirit Gives the Gifts

Spiritual gifts are not earned, purchased, or awarded to the most impressive. The Holy Spirit distributes them according to His wisdom.

Our responsibility is not to manufacture gifts or force everyone toward the roles we recognize most easily. We pay attention. What burden has God placed in a person's heart? Where does that individual bear fruit? What ability repeatedly strengthens others? Where does God's grace seem to work through this person?

We recognize, encourage, cultivate, and, at the right time, release people to serve. Every ministry begins with God's initiative; our role is faithful stewardship.

Gifts Before Titles

Church people can become preoccupied with titles. We may focus upon what someone is called rather than what God has gifted that person to do.

At Cornerstone, we first ask, “How has the Spirit gifted this person?” If someone teaches, encourages, shows mercy, leads, gives, serves, or proclaims truth, we help that gift become faithful and fruitful.

The work comes before recognition. A title should acknowledge what the Spirit is already accomplishing through a faithful servant. Function comes before titles because our desire is not to create positions but to release ministry.

Character Before Responsibility

Giftedness alone is not enough. The Spirit who gives gifts also produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

A person may be highly gifted and spiritually immature. Giftedness can open a door character is not prepared to enter, harming both the person and the church. Therefore, responsibility should grow alongside discipleship.

We ask not only whether someone can do the work, but whether Christ is increasingly visible in the person. Teachers should remain teachable, leaders must learn to serve, and those who correct others should know how to repent. Ministry is not reserved for perfect people, but broader influence requires deeper humility and proven faithfulness.

Gift may attract attention. Character sustains ministry.

Every Generation Is Called

The Spirit is not limited by age. Children can demonstrate faith, students can influence friends, young adults can lead courageously, and older believers carry wisdom gained through decades with Christ.

Children are not merely the future Church. They can worship, pray, learn obedience, and serve today. We protect and teach them appropriately, but we also watch for God's work in them.

Children need older believers who know how to stay with Christ. Older believers need the joy and questions of children. Students and young adults need mature disciples who listen, encourage, and make room for growth. Mature saints need opportunities to pass on what Christ has taught them.

The Church is strongest when generations do more than share a building. It is strongest when they walk and serve together.

Men and Women Serving Together

Every person is created in God's image and possesses equal worth, dignity, and value. The Spirit equips believers according to His sovereign will. Therefore, Cornerstone intentionally encourages, equips, and releases women and men to exercise God-given gifts in accordance with Scripture and the biblical convictions of our church.

We will not allow human tradition, insecurity, or habit to make us ignore what the Spirit is doing through a servant. We test ministry by Scripture, look for Christlike character, seek the Spirit's wisdom and the Body's discernment, then make room for faithful service.

The Church does not flourish when a few gifted people do everything. It flourishes when the Body functions.

From Sitting to Serving

Church can train us to sit. We sit in worship, Bible study, and meetings while others teach, sing, and pray. Eventually, however, a growing disciple should ask, "How can Christ use me?"

This is not guilt-driven volunteering. We want believers to discover the joy of participating in Christ's work. Attention begins to shift from our own needs toward the people and opportunities around us. We recognize that something Christ taught us may strengthen someone else, so we step forward.

Serving also continues our formation. We learn patience because people require it, humility when something goes wrong, dependence when

our ability proves insufficient, and love because Christ places actual people before us. Ministry becomes one place where transformation is revealed.

Released, Not Used

People are not ministry resources. They are people.

Churches can become so focused upon accomplishing a mission that we value people mainly for what they produce. We discover a gift and immediately ask how many places the person can work. We must be careful. We are shepherding people, not managing equipment.

A servant may need rest. A leader may be grieving. A teacher may need a season to be taught. Someone faithful in one assignment may be called into another. Our responsibility is not to squeeze productivity from God's people, but to help them hear Christ and respond faithfully.

Sometimes Christ says serve; at other times, wait, rest, release, or step forward. We do not use people to build Cornerstone. We help people follow Jesus, and as they do, the Spirit releases ministry through them for the common good.

This is the church we envision: not a handful of exhausted people doing everything while others watch, but a living Body in which different gifts, generations, women, and men serve together beneath one Lord and by one Spirit.

At the center is Christ.

Always Christ.

RELEASED TO MINISTRY: EVERY PART OF THE BODY IN MOTION

CORE CONVICTIONS



No Spectators in the Body

Like a body with eyes, ears, and hands, every believer has a specific function and is necessary for the Church to thrive.



Visibility



Value

Visibility Does Not Equal Value

The person holding the microphone is no more important than the person praying faithfully in the back of the room.



Gifts Over Titles

A title should only acknowledge what the Spirit is already accomplishing through a person's faithful service and function.



A UNIFIED BODY



Every Generation Called

Children are not just the "future" church—they can worship and serve today, while older believers provide the wisdom of decades.



Men and Women Together

The Spirit equips all believers according to His sovereign will, encouraging both men and women to exercise their God-given gifts.

THE GIFTEDNESS FRAMEWORK



Distributed by Wisdom

Spiritual gifts are not earned or purchased; the Holy Spirit distributes them according to His wisdom to strengthen others.



Recognize

The church's role is to observe where a person bears fruit and what burdens God has placed on their heart before releasing them to serve.

Encourage

Release



Character Sustains Ministry

Giftedness can open doors, but spiritual maturity and the "Fruit of the Spirit" are required to handle the responsibility of ministry.

THE GOAL OF SERVICE



Released, Not Used

People are not ministry resources to be managed for productivity; they are individuals to be shapened toward Christ.



From Sitting to Serving

Growing disciples move from asking "what can I get?" to "how can Christ use me?" as a natural part of their spiritual transformation.

CHAPTER NINE

Leadership as Servanthood

“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.”

Matthew 20:26, NIV

People often desire leadership before understanding its cost. We see the person making decisions, influencing others, or carrying a title. We do not always see late-night calls, difficult conversations, private prayers, criticism, disappointment, and the weight of caring for people. The brochure leaves a few things out.

Jesus never hid the cost. When James and John sought prominence, He contrasted worldly rulers who “lord it over” others with Kingdom leadership: “Not so with you.” Those words should remain in every Christian leader's heart.

Jesus came down, took the nature of a servant, and humbled Himself to the Cross. His way becomes ours. The towel comes before the title.

Leadership Begins at the Feet of Jesus

Before leading people, we follow Christ. Responsibilities can make leaders so busy working for Jesus that they stop sitting with Jesus. A leader who no longer listens to Christ eventually leads from experience, instinct, personality, pressure, or yesterday's strength.

Functioning is not the same as following.

Mary sat at Jesus' feet. The disciples left their nets. Peter learned that loving Christ came before shepherding Christ's sheep. Leadership begins by listening, learning, and following.

Before asking, "Where am I leading these people?" we ask, "Am I still following Jesus?"

We Follow Before We Lead

No leader graduates from discipleship—not the pastor, deacon, teacher, or ministry leader. Greater responsibility should deepen our awareness of our need to remain with Christ.

After more than forty years of preaching, I am still learning. Christ continues correcting attitudes, confronting fears, and identifying areas where He is still working on me. That is not a leadership disqualification. Refusing to listen may be.

Faithful leaders remain teachable. They receive correction, admit mistakes, and change direction when Scripture and wisdom make change necessary. We do not have to pretend we know everything because someone gave us a title. We follow before we lead, and while leading, we keep following.

Character Is Our Greatest Credential

Gifts impress quickly; character takes longer to see. A person may speak well, organize effectively, or draw attention, but gifts cannot carry leadership's full weight.

Character appears under criticism, when someone else is recognized, when a decision goes another way, or when nobody watches. This is why Scripture emphasizes self-control, faithfulness, hospitality, gentleness, integrity, and healthy relationships.

Cornerstone values competence, but character matters more. A gifted person with undeveloped character may need time to grow. That is discipleship, not rejection. We would rather patiently develop a faithful servant than quickly elevate an impressive personality.

Gift attracts attention. Character sustains ministry.

We Build People Before Programs

Programs are easier than people. Programs fit calendars and budgets. People carry histories, fears, questions, wounds, gifts, personalities, and schedules. Programs rarely call at eleven o'clock at night. People do.

Yet Jesus came for people. Ministries, plans, and healthy organization should help us disciple people, but the program is never the point.

Leaders must see beyond tasks. A person who missed an assignment may require correction, but may also be facing something unseen. A longtime volunteer may need rest. A young believer asking difficult questions may be a future leader learning to think.

We do not use people to build ministry. We use ministry to build people.

We Lead Through Relationship

Jesus did not hand twelve men a leadership manual. He said, "Follow Me," then walked with them. They observed His prayer, teaching, compassion, courage, weariness, and response to critics, children, grieving families, and sinners.

Leadership development at Cornerstone must be relational. Classrooms can teach essential knowledge, but wisdom, discernment, humility, and pastoral sensitivity are often learned by walking beside someone who has walked with Christ.

Emerging leaders need access—not unlimited access, because boundaries matter—but enough proximity to ask questions, enter conversations, participate in ministry, and watch mature leaders recover from mistakes. Sometimes the most powerful lesson is hearing a leader say, “I was wrong. Please forgive me.”

We Equip Rather Than Control

Leaders are tempted to hold ministry tightly. Fear asks whether others will do it our way. Pride insists nobody understands the work as well as we do. Efficiency says it is faster to do the task ourselves.

That may complete the task, but it does not develop the person.

Christian leaders equip God's people for service. Success is not measured by how much ministry a leader personally performs, but by whether others are becoming prepared to serve. We teach, demonstrate, provide opportunity, allow people to try, and accept that different is not always wrong.

Healthy leaders do not gather ministry around themselves. They release ministry through others.

We Lead with Open Hands

Every position, influence, and responsibility is temporary. Leaders receive assignments gratefully, serve faithfully, and release them when the season is complete.

After investing years, ministry can begin to feel like ours. We remember the sacrifices and may resist new people with new ideas. Stewardship requires remembering that the work belongs to Christ. If He continues it through someone else, changes the assignment, or allows a person we developed to become more effective than we are, we rejoice.

John the Baptist said, “He must become greater; I must become less.” We are not building platforms. We are preparing people.

We Finish Well

Starting is exciting; finishing requires faithfulness. Gifted leaders may drift through moral failure, pride, bitterness, exhaustion, or refusal to hear those who love them enough to speak truth. No leader is beyond drift.

We remain watchful, stay close to Christ, invite honest relationships, repent quickly, and reject the belief that influence exempts us from obedience. Greater influence brings greater stewardship.

Finishing well means completing our assignment with faith, love, integrity, and a heart still tender toward Jesus. Paul did not boast that everyone knew his name. He said he had finished the race and kept the faith.

May that be our testimony.

Our Leadership Covenant

Cornerstone leaders accept a sacred stewardship. We remain disciples before leaders, treasure Christ, submit to Scripture, cultivate character before influence, and build people before protecting programs. We lead relationally, equip others, tell truth in love, repent when wrong, celebrate others, and resist making ourselves indispensable.

We hold every title and assignment with open hands because none belongs to us. When our season ends, we seek to leave people who love Jesus more deeply, follow Him more faithfully, and are prepared to help others do the same.

This is leadership at Cornerstone: not power, position, or prominence, but servanthood. We follow the One who took the towel, washed feet, and gave His life.

At the center is Christ.

Always Christ.

LEADERSHIP AS SERVANTHOOD: THE CORNERSTONE PRINCIPLES

Servant leadership prioritizes the 'towel before the title.' It is rooted in the belief that effective leadership begins with following Christ and is sustained by character rather than talent, focusing on building people rather than just maintaining programs.

THE INTERNAL FOUNDATION



Follow Before You Lead

No leader graduates from discipleship; leadership begins by listening to and learning from Christ.



THE RELATIONAL PRACTICE



People Before Programs

We do not use people to build ministry; we use ministry to build people.



Character Over Gifts

While gifts attract attention, only character can carry the weight and sustain long-term ministry.



Equip Rather Than Control

Success is measured by how well others are prepared to serve, not by personal performance.



The Cost of the Towel

Leadership is not prominence, but the weight of late-night cells, difficult conversations, and private prayers.



Lead with Open Hands

Every assignment is temporary stewardship; we rejoice when Christ continues the work through others.



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CHAPTER TEN

A Culture of Truth and Grace

“Speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.”
Ephesians 4:15, NIV

Truth and love belong together, though the Church has not always kept them together well. Some Christians hold truth firmly but deliver it harshly. Others fear causing discomfort and avoid necessary truth.

Jesus was full of grace and truth—not half of each, but full of both. He refused to condemn the woman caught in adultery and told her to leave her life of sin. He loved the wealthy young man and told him what he did not want to hear. He welcomed sinners and never pretended sin did not matter.

We desire Cornerstone to become a people who tell truth because we love one another and love one another enough to tell truth. Truth without love can become a weapon. Love without truth can become a lie.

We Tell the Truth

Honesty sounds simple until it costs us. Truth may require an uncomfortable conversation, admitting we were wrong, revealing a struggle, or risking another person's disappointment.

So we hide. We say “I’m fine” while falling apart, smile in the hallway while carrying resentment, remain silent in meetings, and discuss concerns

with everyone except the person who needs to hear them. Church people can appear peaceful while privately fighting wars. That is not peace.

At Cornerstone, we reject gossip, manipulation, and the quiet dishonesty of pretense. This does not authorize everyone to say whatever comes to mind. Wisdom, timing, and motive matter. But when truth needs to be spoken, we speak it because relationships built upon pretense cannot become healthy.

We Tell the Truth in Love

How we speak matters. Cruelty does not become righteous because someone says, "I'm just being honest." A person can be honest and mean.

Love governs the motive, tone, and purpose of truth. Before correcting someone, we ask whether we desire restoration or merely want to prove we are right. Love does not weaken truth; it delivers truth with the other person's good in view.

Sometimes love is gentle and sometimes firm. Christian correction, however, must never seek to humiliate or destroy. Our goal is to bring people closer to Christ, not crush them beneath our superiority. Truth spoken in love should sound like someone helping you home.

We Refuse to Play Church

Religious appearance can become a substitute for transformation. We learn church language, songs, and behaviors while remaining unchanged within. Jesus was never impressed by performance. His strongest words often confronted people who looked righteous while neglecting justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

God did not call us to perform Christianity. He called us to become like Christ.

Playing church asks, “How do I look?” Discipleship asks, “Who am I becoming?” We desire integrity—public worship and private life increasingly agreeing. Therefore, we bring the real person to Jesus: angry, afraid, jealous, wounded, questioning, loving Christ yet discovering resistance.

Transformation cannot occur in places we insist upon hiding.

We Make Room for Repentance

If confession leads to permanent branding or becomes material for gossip, people learn to hide. If leaders must appear spiritually invincible, concealment becomes part of the culture.

The Gospel gives another way. Because of Christ, sin can be confessed, forgiveness received, and restoration pursued. Repentance is coming home—turning from what drew us away and returning to the One who loves us.

Grace does not erase consequences or abandon wisdom. Trust damaged by failure may require time to rebuild, and some sin may affect a particular leadership assignment. Yet failure does not have to be the end of the story.

We want Cornerstone to be a place where people repent quickly, receive grace gratefully, and find mature believers willing to restore without pretending the fall did not matter. We tell truth about sin and truth about grace. Jesus is greater.

We Handle Conflict Biblically

Where people gather, conflict eventually arrives. The question is not whether disagreement occurs, but what we do with it.

At Cornerstone, we go to one another. Our first response is not to recruit people who agree with us or conduct a campaign to make everyone hear our side. We speak honestly, listen carefully, and ask questions because what we assumed may not be what happened. We seek understanding before judgment and reconciliation before vindication.

When wrong, we do not say, “I’m sorry you were offended.” That is an accusation dressed as an apology. We say, “I was wrong. Please forgive me.”

Conflict handled biblically can deepen relationships. Peace is not the absence of hard conversations. Sometimes it is the fruit of having them well.

We Protect People, Not Secrets

Confidentiality protects dignity by recognizing that everything known about someone does not belong to everyone. Pastors and leaders must handle private information carefully.

Secrecy is different. It can protect abuse, manipulation, sin, or unhealthy leadership because disclosure might harm the church's image. Cornerstone's reputation is never more important than people's well-being.

We will not conceal abuse or dangerous behavior to preserve appearances. When reporting is legally required, we report. When professional help is needed, we seek it. Pastors are not automatically physicians, attorneys, law-enforcement officers, or licensed therapists because someone calls them Reverend. Wisdom recognizes limits.

We protect people, not institutional appearance.

We Extend Grace Because We Need Grace

It is easy to become impatient when we forget Christ's patience with us. After many years with Jesus, I still find weaknesses requiring prayer, watchfulness, and surrender. Christ continues His work in me.

Grace does not lower the call to holiness. It remembers that growth usually takes time. We teach, encourage, correct, walk beside people through failure, and celebrate transformation. We care about the direction of a person's life while remembering that we are not the Holy Spirit.

We can speak truth, encourage obedience, pray, warn, and walk with people. Only Christ transforms them.

This Is the Culture We Desire

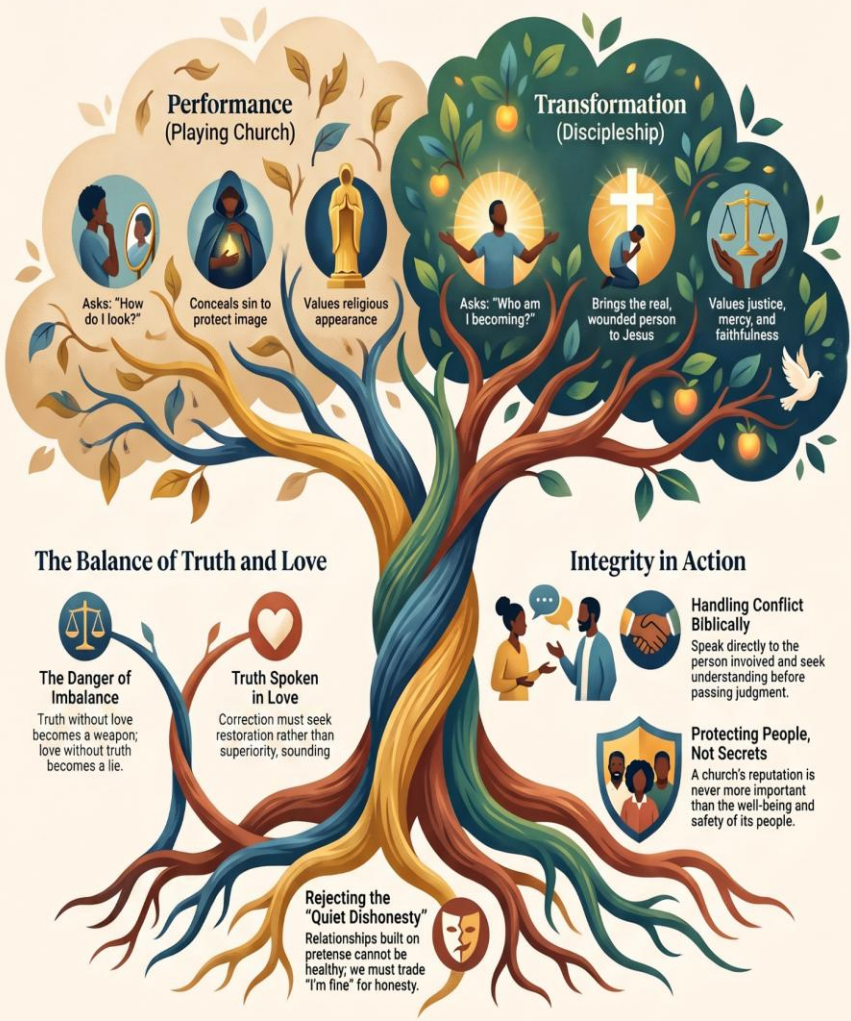
We desire a church where truth is spoken, grace is abundant, and people do not have to hide behind religious appearances. We will admit wrong, repent, forgive, have necessary conversations, protect the vulnerable, confront harm, and remain patient because Christ has been patient with us.

Such a culture will not emerge because we wrote it in a book. We must practice it again and again: truth, love, repentance, forgiveness, and grace, all shaped by Jesus Christ.

At the center is Christ.

Always Christ.

A Culture of Truth and Grace



© NotebookLM

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Prayer as Dependence

“Apart from me you can do nothing.”

John 15:5, NIV

I have prayed for many years, though not always consistently or with great faith. Some seasons prayer felt as natural as breathing. In others my mind wandered, words felt dry, and I wondered whether I was merely repeating yesterday.

Still, Christ kept calling me back.

Prayer is not simply something Christians do. It is the confession of a dependent life. Every genuine prayer acknowledges what our flesh prefers to forget: We need God—not only when the doctor calls, money is short, or someone we love is in trouble, but when life is going well, ministry is flourishing, and we know exactly what we intend to do next. Perhaps especially then.

Jesus said, “Apart from me you can do nothing.” We believe Him, so we pray.

The Breath of the Church

Prayer is not one ministry among many. It is the life of every ministry. We preach prayerfully because only God opens hearts, teach prayerfully because information cannot transform, serve prayerfully because compassion cannot give eternal life, and lead prayerfully because we cannot see tomorrow.

Planning is not the problem. The problem begins when confidence in our plan becomes greater than dependence upon God. Every genuine work of God begins with His initiative and is sustained by His power.

Prayer is not our last resort after ideas are exhausted. It is our first response. In opportunity, difficulty, uncertainty, blessing, conflict, growth, and loss, we turn to our Father because His wisdom exceeds experience, His purpose exceeds our plans, and His power exceeds our strength.

Prayer Is Relationship

Scripture tells us to bring requests to God specifically and expectantly, but prayer is more than presenting needs to heaven. It is communion with God.

Because Christ reconciled us to the Father, the veil is torn and we have been brought near. We worship, confess, listen, rejoice, lament, intercede, and surrender. Sometimes we have many words; grief or weariness may leave us with few. God does not measure vocabulary. He welcomes His children.

Some people believe they cannot pray because they do not sound like someone at church whose voice changes and King James English suddenly appears. If that is how you pray, pray on. But prayer is not a performance. Talk to your Father. We do not pray to persuade God to care; we pray because He already does.

Prayer Shapes the Disciple

We often enter prayer wanting a circumstance, diagnosis, financial need, relationship, or problem to change. There is nothing wrong with asking God to move mountains, heal, provide, and open doors. Sometimes He changes the situation immediately, sometimes later, and sometimes not as we expected.

Through the years, I discovered that while asking God to change a situation, He was often changing me. Prayer exposes pride, teaches dependence, rehearses God's faithfulness, quiets anxiety, and places burdens into the Father's hands. It aligns our desires with His purposes.

Jesus prayed honestly in Gethsemane: "Take this cup from me." He also surrendered: "Yet not what I will, but what you will." Prayer holds honest desire and complete surrender together.

The greatest answer is not always a changed circumstance. Sometimes it is a changed disciple. Prayer is not merely preparation for ministry. Prayer is ministry.

We Listen Before We Lead

Experience helps leaders remember what worked last time, but it can become a substitute for dependence. We may have several solutions before another person finishes explaining the problem.

Cornerstone desires leaders who listen to God before asking others to follow. Decisiveness matters, but the Kingdom also values discernment, and discernment requires listening.

Before major decisions, new ministries, leadership appointments, changes in direction, and difficult conversations, we pray. We also pray during success, which can make us forget dependence faster than failure. Prayer reminds leaders: This is Christ's Church. I am a steward. I do not manufacture God's will; I seek wisdom to recognize it and courage to obey.

Prayer Unites the Church

God's people may enter prayer carrying different opinions and experiences. When we turn together toward God, differences find their proper size. God becomes larger in our view, and so does grace.

It is difficult to sincerely pray for someone while reducing that person to what irritates us most. Shared prayer produces shared burdens. When I hear you pray for your child, the burden becomes ours. When we pray for the community, we see neighbors differently. When we seek God for Cornerstone's future, the church becomes a stewardship we carry together.

We desire every ministry to pray, every leader to become a praying leader, every family a praying family, and every believer a praying disciple—not to appear spiritual, but because apart from Christ we can do nothing.

Prayer Precedes Power

Jesus, the prophets, apostles, and early Church prayed. Before Pentecost, during persecution, and when leaders were sent, God's people acknowledged dependence.

Churches can become so busy that prayer is reduced to an opening exercise. We decide what to do and ask God to bless it. But prayer is not a ribbon tied around our plans. We seek God because only God can do God's work.

Programs may impress, methods may organize, preaching may be eloquent, and music excellent, but only the Spirit gives life. Activity without prayer produces exhaustion. We work, plan, and prepare, but we pray because we know where power comes from.

We Pray Expectantly

Dependence is not passivity. We pray expectantly because our confidence rests in God's goodness, wisdom, sovereignty, and love—not our words or emotional intensity.

God may answer immediately, differently than expected, or through waiting. Waiting exposes whether we trust His character when we cannot trace His hand. We want answers; sometimes God gives us Himself and says, “Trust Me here.”

So we bring the burden, surrender, listen, and remember again that the God who hears is faithful. Prayer teaches us to walk by faith rather than sight.

Prayer Beyond the Sanctuary

Prayer belongs in homes, automobiles, classrooms, workplaces, hospitals, celebrations, funerals, victories, and grief. It may be a long conversation or one sentence before entering a room: “Lord, help me.” “Give me wisdom.” “Jesus, I do not understand, but I am staying with You.”

Prayer becomes the posture of disciples whose hearts remain turned toward Christ. We keep talking, listening, and coming home.

Morning by Morning

Prayer has shaped Cornerstone from its earliest years—in worship, Bible study, small groups, fasting, hospital rooms, and seasons when we did not know what to do.

Morning Manna expresses that commitment. Morning by morning, before the day fully begins, we open Scripture, listen for the Shepherd's voice, and pray. It is not elaborate. It does not need to be. Before the world tells us what to fear, desire, chase, or worry about, we want to hear from God.

We Will Remain a Praying People

We do not know what challenges, opportunities, resources, or questions Cornerstone will face in 2040. We know what it will need: God.

Future leaders, pray when the church grows and when it struggles, when the path is clear and when you cannot see ahead. Pray before and during planning, while serving, when tired, and after God answers. Teach children to pray. Let young people hear prayer. Gather leaders, pray with the sick and joyful, and help new believers understand that prayer is not impressive language.

Prayer is dependence, relationship, and the privilege of redeemed children entering their Father's presence because Jesus opened the way. It is not our last resort but our first response.

We pray because we believe. We pray because we need Him. We will keep praying until Christ returns.

At the center is Christ.

Always Christ.



CHAPTER TWELVE

Biblical Community

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

John 13:35, NIV

We were never meant to walk alone. Culture admires independence, but Christianity is filled with “one another”: love, encourage, forgive, serve, teach, pray for, confess to, and bear burdens with one another. You cannot “one another” by yourself.

God saves us individually but does not leave us isolated. He joins us to Christ and, in Christ, to His Body and family. The Cornerstone Path is not solitary. We walk with Christ and one another.

More Than People in the Same Room

Gathering for worship, Scripture, prayer, and encouragement matters deeply. Yet sharing a room does not automatically create community. We may sit beside someone for years and know where that person sits, worships, or eats after church without knowing what he or she carries.

Biblical community requires relationship—the willingness to know and be known. That takes time, patience, and courage because people may discover we are not as impressive as we appeared from three pews away.

Community asks the second question. “How are you?” “I’m fine.” “No, how are you really?” Sometimes relationship begins there.

We Belong to One Another

The Church is not a club formed around preference. We differ in music, personality, background, interests, politics, spending, and restaurant choices. What joins us is greater: We belong to Christ and therefore to one another.

Paul calls us one Body. The hand cannot dismiss the foot, and the eye cannot tell the hand it is unnecessary. Christ connects us and makes us interdependent. Your grief, growth, family, faithfulness, and spiritual health matter to me—not because I intend to run your life, but because members of one Body cannot remain indifferent.

When one suffers, we suffer; when one is honored, we rejoice. That is family.

We Worship Together

Personal devotion is essential, but gathered worship offers something solitude cannot reproduce. I have entered worship carrying a weight and heard someone sing with strength I did not possess. Their faith helped carry mine.

Worship offered during trial becomes testimony: God is faithful. Christ is worthy. I am still here. We gather because God deserves the praise of His people, and in His wisdom our worship also strengthens one another. Sometimes I sing because I am strong; sometimes because you are singing beside me.

We Learn Together

God's Word forms us as a people. We study to know God, understand truth, and follow Jesus faithfully. Learning together adds questions we did

not think to ask, insights we missed, wisdom from mature disciples, and fresh perspective from new believers.

We want Cornerstone to remain a learning church where questions are welcomed, Scripture is opened, and people learn how to think biblically rather than merely being told what to think. Teachers remain learners, older believers listen to younger ones, and younger believers value wisdom earned through years with Christ.

None of us knows everything. We sit together under the authority of God's Word.

We Carry One Another's Burdens

Life becomes heavy through death, illness, unemployment, marital strain, loneliness, financial pressure, caregiving, or the quiet exhaustion of carrying something too long. Bearing burdens requires someone close enough to notice.

Not everyone needs to know everything, and healthy boundaries matter. But somebody should know, pray, and be able to say, “You do not have to carry this alone.” Sometimes we provide a meal, transportation, money, or appropriate assistance. Other times nothing can be fixed.

Pastors must learn this too. Sometimes there is no sermon, three-point answer, or verse to use as a bandage. Sometimes we sit, listen, cry, and pray. Jesus knew resurrection was coming at Lazarus's tomb and still wept. Presence is ministry too.

We Tell One Another the Truth

Love is not always comfortable. Every disciple needs people who can ask, “Are you all right? What is happening? Have you prayed? Are you willing to hear that you may be wrong?”

Biblical community makes room for truth and grace together. We do not police lives or appoint ourselves assistants to the Holy Spirit, but neither do we remain silent while someone we love moves toward destruction.

Accountability is love refusing indifference. We speak truth in love because we want one another to remain close to Christ.

We Forgive One Another

Genuine community requires forgiveness because people eventually hurt one another—sometimes carelessly and sometimes deliberately.

Disciples bring hurt to Christ and tell truth about what happened. Forgiveness does not call a wound imaginary or pretend sin does not matter. We confront when necessary, establish wise boundaries, and seek reconciliation where possible. But we refuse to build homes in bitterness.

Every Christian lives beneath God's mercy. Our debt was greater than we could pay, and Christ paid it. The Cross changes how we hold the debts of others.

Some wounds are deep and healing takes time, but disciples keep bringing them to Christ until resentment no longer rules. Grace received becomes grace extended.

We Open Our Lives

Hospitality is more than entertaining. Entertaining cleans the house and hopes nobody opens the wrong closet. Hospitality says, “There is room for you here.” It opens tables, homes, schedules, and lives.

People can communicate constantly and remain profoundly lonely. We may know what someone ate or where they traveled without ever

sitting across a table and listening to the heart. Biblical community requires presence.

Hospitality does not require polished perfection or matching dishes. Open the door, make coffee, order pizza if necessary, sit, talk, and listen. Sometimes discipleship happens around a table. Jesus seemed to understand that.

Every Generation Needs Every Generation

The local church brings generations together in a culture that separates them. Age-specific ministry has value, but the Church must not become a collection of groups that never know one another.

Children need adults who have walked with Christ for decades. Young adults need mature believers who listen before lecturing. Older adults need the energy, questions, and perspective of younger generations.

We want children to know older saints by name, older saints praying for students, young leaders sitting with seasoned leaders, and seasoned leaders making room at the table. Stories are told, questions asked, lessons shared, and wisdom transferred. Every generation has something to receive and give. That is how a church outlives its leaders.

No One Walks Alone

This vision does not mean Cornerstone will notice every burden immediately or respond perfectly. We are still being transformed. Yet we intentionally seek a church where people are known, burdens shared, truth spoken, grace received, relationships restored, homes opened, and generations united.

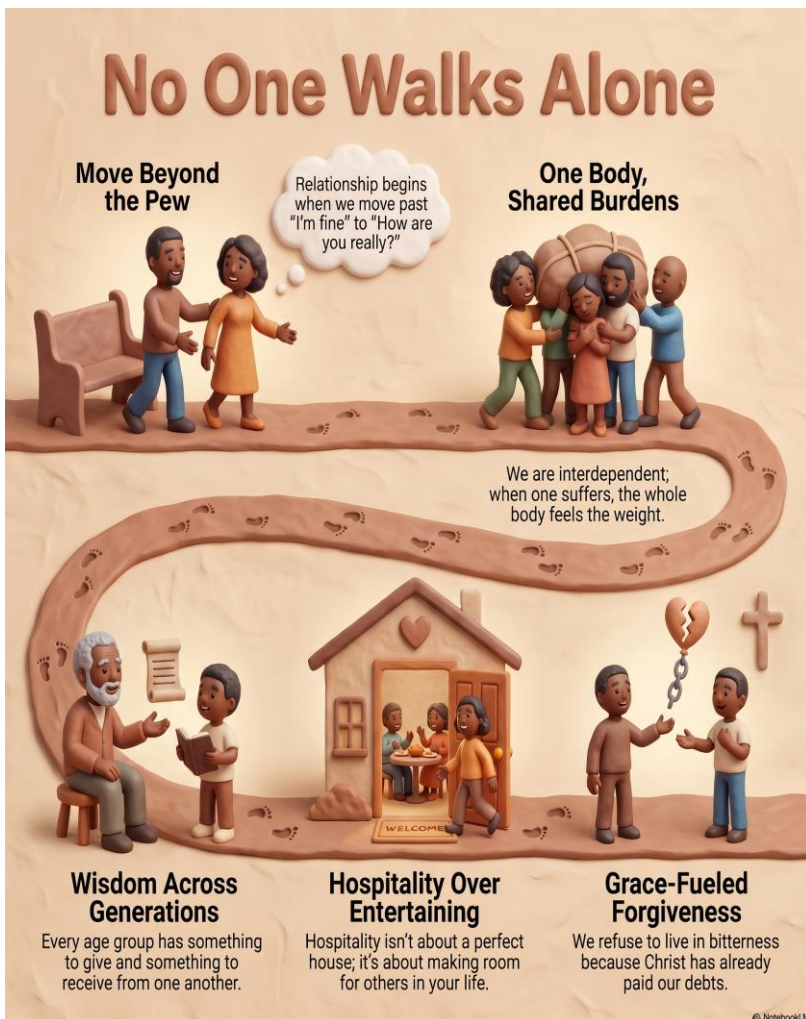
We worship, learn, serve, grieve, and celebrate together. Your faith may strengthen me when mine is weak; mine may strengthen you when your season becomes difficult.

The Cornerstone Path is not solitary. We walk with Christ, and we walk with one another.

No one walks alone.

At the center is Christ.

Always Christ.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Generosity as a Way of Life

“Freely you have received; freely give.”

Matthew 10:8

Generosity is about money.

There. We might as well get that out of the way. Whenever the Church begins talking about generosity, somebody immediately starts checking to see whether his wallet is still in his pocket. I understand. Churches have not always handled conversations about money well, and some ministries have used guilt, pressure and promises of material blessing to manipulate people into giving.

We reject that.

But we will not allow the misuse of biblical truth to keep us from teaching biblical truth.

Generosity includes money.

It just doesn't end there.

Generosity is a way of living that grows from understanding the grace of God. We have received freely from Christ. Grace we could not earn. Mercy we did not deserve. Forgiveness we could never purchase. The Gospel introduces us to a God who gives.

“For God so loved the world that he gave...”

Giving is in the heart of God.

As we become more like Christ, generosity should become increasingly visible in us.

We Live with Open Hands

Everything we possess has been entrusted to us by God.

Our time.

Our abilities.

Our opportunities.

Our influence.

Our homes.

Our resources.

Our money.

We are stewards.

We settled that at the beginning of this book, and the principle reaches far beyond the church building. If everything belongs to God, then the disciple must learn to hold everything with open hands.

That doesn't mean possessions are wrong. Scripture does not teach that poverty is inherently spiritual or that every believer must give away everything he owns. It does mean that we refuse to allow what we possess to possess us.

Jesus understood the grip money can have on the human heart. That's why He talked about it so often. Money can quietly become security, identity, status and power. We begin thinking we own it, and before long it owns us.

Generosity loosens the grip.

Every time I give freely, I am making a declaration:

God is my source. What I possess is not my god.

That's worship.

We Give Because We Have Received

Christian generosity begins with grace. We do not give to persuade God to bless us. We do not place money in an offering and wait for heaven to issue a dividend check. Giving is not a spiritual investment scheme.

We give because God has already been immeasurably generous toward us in Jesus Christ.

Paul points the Corinthian church to Christ when teaching about generosity: “Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”

Look at Jesus.

That's the pattern.

Christ gave Himself.

Therefore, generosity is not first a budget issue. It is a discipleship issue. The question is not simply, How much should I give? The deeper question is, What does my giving reveal about what I believe?

Do I believe God is my provider?

Do I believe Christ is my treasure?

Do I believe there is greater joy in giving than receiving?

Do I trust Jesus enough to open my hands?

We give because we believe Him.

Generosity Must Become Personal

It is easy to admire generosity in other people.

We love stories about someone giving sacrificially to help a struggling family or quietly paying a student's tuition. We are moved when churches respond to disasters or communities rally around people in need.

Those stories inspire us.

But eventually generosity has to reach my life.

My schedule.

My table.

My bank account.

My resources.

My convenience.

The generous life begins when I stop asking only, “What does the church have available?” and begin asking, “What has God placed in my hands?”

Perhaps you have a skill someone needs. Maybe you have a vehicle and somebody needs a ride. You may have an extra bedroom, a business connection or years of wisdom that could help a younger person avoid a painful mistake.

Sometimes what you have is money.

And, yes, sometimes the answer is simply to give it.

Not form a committee.

Not conduct a six-week needs assessment.

Help the person.

Wisdom matters, of course. Generosity should not become carelessness, nor should compassion continually enable destructive behavior. But we must also be careful that what we call wisdom is not just selfishness wearing glasses.

Love opens its hands.

We Give to the Work of Christ

The people of Cornerstone Fellowship Church support the ministry of the church through faithful, proportionate and cheerful giving.

Our giving makes ministry possible. It helps us teach children, develop disciples, serve our community, care for people in need, support Gospel work and prepare for future generations. Buildings require care. Ministries require resources. Mission requires investment.

There is nothing unspiritual about saying that plainly.

But our goal is larger than meeting a budget.

We are forming generous disciples.

A church can reach its financial goal while its people remain spiritually attached to their possessions. We want more than funded programs. We want hearts increasingly freed from the love of money and lives marked by joyful generosity.

This is why giving must be taught as part of discipleship.

Not pressured.

Not manipulated.

Taught.

We open the Scriptures. We tell the truth. We encourage obedience and trust the Holy Spirit to work in His people.

Giving should become another place where the disciple says:

Jesus, I believe You.

We Notice Need

Jesus noticed people.

The blind man beside the road.

The widow placing her offering in the temple treasury.

The hungry crowd.

The grieving mother.

People others walked past caught His attention.

A generous church must learn to notice.

Need is often quiet. Not everyone who is struggling will make an announcement. Pride, embarrassment or simple weariness may keep a person silent.

So we pay attention.

We listen.

We learn to ask questions.

Sometimes generosity begins with seeing what everyone else missed.

This is especially important as Cornerstone serves our community. We do not want to create ministries simply because churches are expected to have them. We want to know our neighbors. What burdens are families carrying? Where are children struggling? What challenges face seniors, single parents and young adults?

Then we ask:

What has God placed in our hands that could become an expression of His love?

Our compassion may open a door.

Christ transforms lives.

We Give Without Needing Credit

Jesus warned against practicing generosity in order to be seen by others.

Apparently, people have enjoyed recognition for a very long time. Social media didn't invent that. It just gave it better lighting.

There is nothing wrong with thanking people. Faithful service and generosity should be appreciated. But the mature disciple does not need applause in order to give.

Sometimes nobody will know.

That's all right.

Your name may not appear on a plaque. Nobody may call you to the front. The person you helped may never fully understand what your gift cost you.

Christ knows.

That is enough.

Generosity does not need an audience when Christ is the reward.

We give for the glory of God and the good of people.

A Generous Church

I want Cornerstone to be generous.

Not merely a church with generous programs.

A generous people.

I want generosity to be so woven into our life together that we instinctively ask how we can help. When a family is hurting, we move toward them. When our community faces a need, we prayerfully consider what we can do. When another church or ministry is faithfully advancing the Gospel, we rejoice that the Kingdom of God is larger than Cornerstone.

We do not have to put our name on everything.

The Kingdom belongs to Christ.

Some of the most important seeds we plant may grow in fields we do not own and produce fruit we never personally see.

Plant anyway.

Give anyway.

Serve anyway.

Love anyway.

We have freely received.

So we freely give.

Open hands. Generous hearts. Faithful stewards.

This is the life we desire.

Because at the center is Christ.

Always Christ.

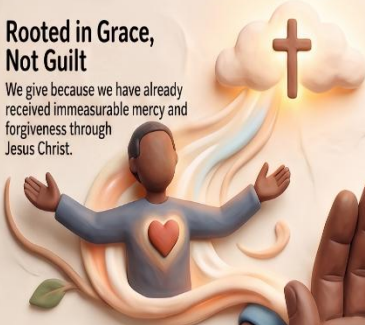
Generosity: A Way of Living with Open Hands

Generosity is not merely a financial transaction but a way of life modeled after the grace of God. By viewing ourselves as stewards, we learn to hold our time, resources, and influence with 'open hands' to serve others and honor Christ.

The Heart of Generosity

Rooted in Grace, Not Guilt

We give because we have already received immeasurable mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.



Stewardship Over Ownership

True generosity begins when we realize everything we possess has been entrusted to us by God.



A Matter of Discipleship

Giving is not a budget issue; it is a reflection of our trust in God.



Living with Open Hands

More Than Just Money

Generosity includes your schedule, your skills, your home, and your personal influence.



Learning to Notice Need

A generous heart pays attention to the quiet struggles that everyone else might miss.



Giving Without Credit

The mature disciple does not need applause or an audience when Christ is the reward.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Worship That Transforms

*“God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit
and in truth.”*

John 4:24, NIV

Worship Begins with God

Worship does not begin with our favorite song, our preferred style, the musicians, the preacher, or even the mood we happen to be in when we arrive.

Worship begins with God.

It begins with who He is and what He has done. He is our Creator and Sustainer. He is holy, faithful, merciful, and worthy. He loved us while we were still sinners, gave His Son for our salvation, raised Him from the dead, and brought us into His family by grace.

We do not gather to make God worthy of worship.

We gather because He already is.

That truth protects us from turning worship into a matter of personal taste. Styles change. Songs change. Instruments change. One generation may be carried by a hymn it has sung for fifty years, while another is learning to praise God through a song written last month. The important question is not simply, “Did I like it?” The better question is, “Did it direct my heart toward God and help me respond faithfully to Him?”

We are not consumers reviewing a religious experience.

We are redeemed people responding to the living God.

Worship Shapes the Heart

What we worship eventually shapes what we become.

That is why worship is central to discipleship. As we behold Christ, we begin to resemble Him. As we adore Him, our desires are reordered. As we confess our sins, humility grows. As we remember His grace, gratitude deepens. As we hear His Word, faith is strengthened. As we surrender again to His Lordship, obedience becomes our joyful response.

The Holy Spirit uses worship to form the life of the disciple.

This means the purpose of worship is not merely to make us feel better for a little while. Thank God, worship often encourages us. It lifts weary hearts, renews hope, and reminds us that our circumstances are not greater than our God. But encouragement is not the end of worship.

Transformation is.

We can sing loudly on Sunday and still live stubbornly on Monday. Volume is not the same as surrender. A worship experience that moves our emotions but never reaches our attitudes, relationships, decisions, and obedience has not yet completed its work in us.

Every gathering should leave us more devoted to Christ than when we arrived.

We do not gather merely to be inspired.

We gather to be transformed.

Worship Involves the Whole Person

Jesus said the Father seeks those who will worship in the Spirit and in truth.

Biblical worship involves the whole person. We worship with the mind as we receive truth. We worship with the heart as our affections are stirred toward God. We worship with the body as we sing, kneel, stand, clap, lift our hands, bow our heads, or sit quietly before Him. We worship with the will as we surrender and obey.

Emotion is not the enemy of worship. God created our emotions, and the Gospel gives us plenty to feel. There are times when joy needs a shout, gratitude needs a song, grief needs tears, and awe leaves us silent.

But emotion alone cannot carry worship.

Some believers are expressive. Others are quiet. Some lift their hands. Others close their eyes and scarcely move. God is not searching for one personality type. He is seeking hearts that are sincerely turned toward Him.

Worship may be loud or quiet, but it must never be empty.

It thinks.

It feels.

It responds.

It yields.

We Are Participants, Not Spectators

The gathered church is not an audience watching a religious performance.

We are a congregation responding together to the living God.

Pastors, musicians, singers, teachers, ushers, and those serving behind the scenes help lead the gathering, but they do not worship in place of the congregation. The platform exists to serve the people, and together the people offer praise to God.

Nobody comes merely to watch church happen.

We sing. We pray. We listen. We confess. We give. We receive the Word. We encourage one another. We celebrate grace. We bear witness to the goodness of God.

Participation does not require everyone to respond in exactly the same way. Unity is not sameness. It means that with different voices, personalities, ages, and experiences, we turn our attention toward the same Lord.

When the church worships together, the strong help carry the weary. The joyful remind the sorrowful that morning is coming. The testimony of one generation strengthens the faith of another.

Together, we remember who God is.

Together, we declare that He is worthy.

Excellence Is an Offering

Because God is worthy, we desire to offer Him our best.

Excellence is not perfection, showmanship, or the pressure to impress people. Excellence is faithful stewardship. It means we prepare carefully, arrive prayerfully, serve joyfully, and lead humbly.

The musician rehearses. The teacher studies. The sound team checks the equipment. The usher pays attention. The preacher prepares both the message and the heart. Not because worship is a production, but because preparation can itself become an offering of love.

We should never use sincerity as an excuse for carelessness. At the same time, we must never make perfection the price of participation. People learn by serving. Gifts grow through use. Grace gives us room to develop.

Our goal is not a flawless performance.

Our goal is to remove unnecessary distractions so people can see and respond to Christ.

We do not pursue excellence to make Cornerstone look impressive.

We pursue excellence because God is worthy of faithful service.

Worship Is Rooted in Spirit and Truth

Jesus joined Spirit and truth together, and we must not separate what He joined.

Our worship must be alive with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and it must be anchored in the truth God has revealed in Scripture. The Spirit never leads God's people away from God's Word. He illuminates it, applies it, and empowers us to live it.

That is why Scripture must remain central whenever we gather. We read the Word. We preach the Word. We sing truths drawn from the Word. We pray according to the Word. And when the gathering ends, we obey the Word.

Truth without affection can become cold. Affection without truth can become unstable. Biblical worship brings heart and truth together. We want minds instructed, hearts awakened, and wills surrendered to God.

The songs we sing matter because songs teach. The words we repeat eventually settle into memory, and what settles into memory often returns when life becomes hard. Therefore, our worship must give people more than a momentary feeling. It must give them truth strong enough to stand on.

Worship Continues After Sunday

When the benediction is given and the worship service concludes, worship does not end.

It simply changes locations.

We worship through integrity at work, patience at home, generosity toward those in need, faithfulness in marriage, kindness toward a neighbor, and forgiveness when we have been wronged. We worship when we tell the truth even though a lie would be easier. We worship when we serve without recognition and obey when obedience costs us something.

Sunday worship must become Monday obedience.

The song continues through the life we live before God.

This is what Paul meant when he called believers to offer their bodies as living sacrifices. Worship is not confined to a sanctuary because the disciple's whole life belongs to Christ. Our work, money, relationships, suffering, service, and joy all come under His Lordship.

And when a church lives this way, worship becomes witness. People begin to see that Jesus is not merely someone we sing about. He is the Lord we follow. Our lives announce His worth before we ever open our mouths to explain our faith.

At the Center Is Christ

Methods will change. Musical styles will change. Technology will change. Leaders will change. Future generations may worship in ways we cannot yet imagine.

But the center must never change.

We gather because of Jesus. We sing because of Jesus. We pray through Jesus. We proclaim His Word, remember His death, celebrate His resurrection, and eagerly await His return.

Christ is not one feature of Christian worship.

He is the reason for it.

Therefore, every generation of Cornerstone should keep asking: Does our worship direct hearts toward Christ? Does it teach truth? Does it form disciples? Does it produce joyful obedience? Does it honor God rather than personalities, preferences, or performances?

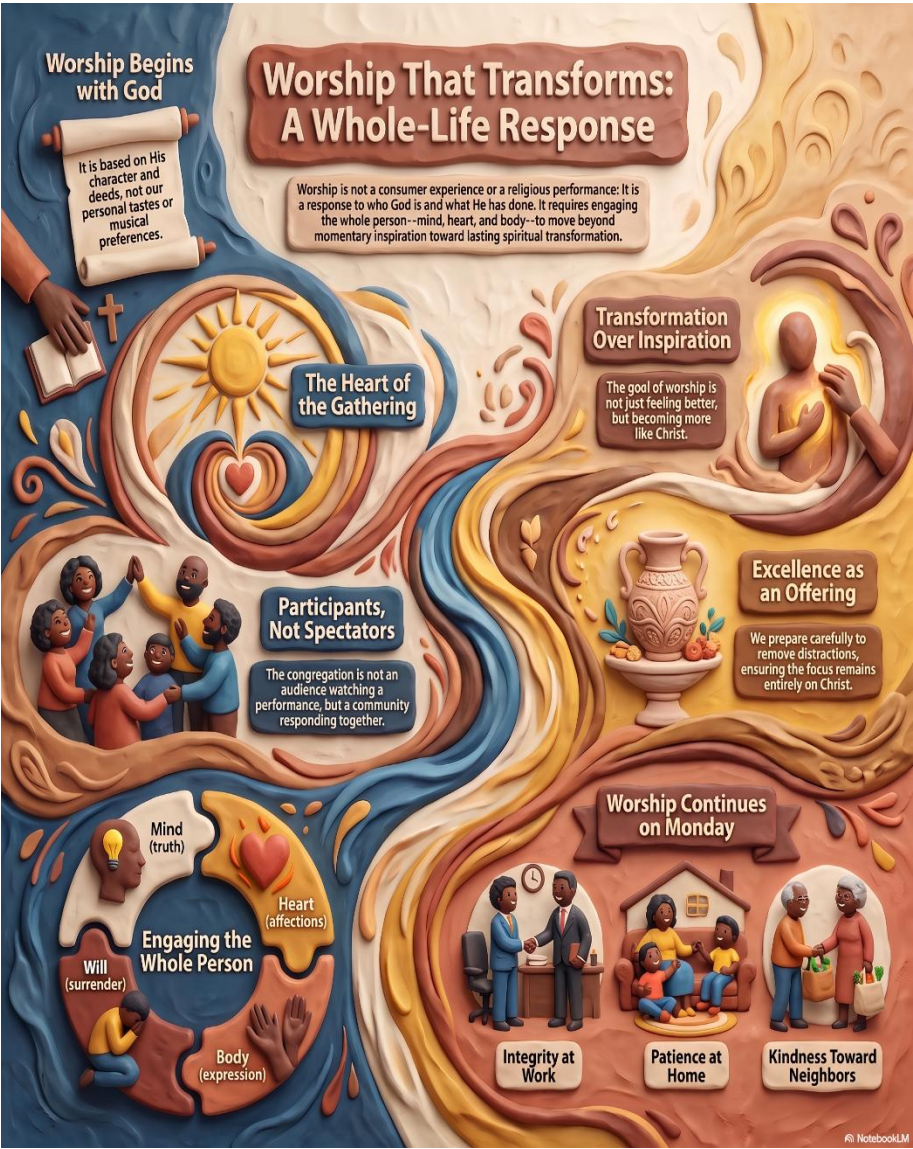
If it does, let us embrace it with gratitude.

If it distracts from Him, let us lovingly reconsider it.

We will worship with reverence because God is holy. We will worship with joy because Christ has redeemed us. We will worship with expectancy because the Holy Spirit is present among His people. And when the gathering ends, we will continue worshiping through lives surrendered to Jesus Christ.

At the center is Christ.

Always Christ.



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Every Member a Disciple

*“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them
in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy
Spirit.”*

Matthew 28:19, NIV

The Mission Belongs to All of Us

The mission of Cornerstone Fellowship Church is clear: “Working together, we exist to make disciples of Jesus through the love of Jesus Christ.” Those first two words matter. Working together means the mission does not belong only to the pastor, the deacons, the teachers, or the people whose names appear on a ministry list. It belongs to the whole church.

Jesus gave the command to make disciples to His followers. Pastors and teachers have a particular responsibility to equip the saints, but the work of ministry was never intended to be performed by a small group while everybody else watched. The Church is strongest when every believer understands that grace has not only brought us into Christ; grace has also given us a place in His work.

This does not mean every member will preach, lead a ministry, or serve in the same way. The body of Christ has many members, and the Holy Spirit distributes gifts according to His wisdom. Yet every member is called to follow Jesus faithfully, love others deeply, serve with what God has provided, and help somebody else take a step toward Christ.

Our mission is shared because our calling is shared. We are working together.

Membership Is More Than Attendance

Gathering with the church matters. We need worship, Scripture, prayer, fellowship, and the encouragement of other believers. A disciple who continually separates from the body will eventually discover how difficult it is to grow alone.

Still, attendance by itself is not discipleship. A person can sit in the same sanctuary, hear the same sermons, sing the same songs, and remain unchanged for years. We can learn the language of church without allowing Jesus to confront our pride, reshape our priorities, or lead us into obedience.

Church membership is not merely having a name on a roll or receiving certain privileges from an organization. It is a covenant relationship with a local body of believers in which we commit ourselves to worship, grow, serve, give, forgive, and participate in the mission of Christ. Membership gives us a spiritual family, but it also gives us responsibility within that family.

The question is not simply, “Do I belong to Cornerstone?” A more searching question is, “Am I following Jesus with the people of Cornerstone?” That is the kind of belonging that forms disciples.

Every Disciple Has a Next Step

No two disciples are in exactly the same place. Some are learning the foundations of faith. Others are discovering how Scripture speaks into marriage, money, work, relationships, and private habits. Some are walking through suffering and learning to trust Christ when nothing makes sense. Others are ready to serve, lead, teach, or begin discipling someone else.

This is why the words *You Are Here* are so important along the Cornerstone Path. They are not a judgment against us. They help us tell the truth about where we are so we can recognize the next faithful step Christ is calling us to take.

The next step may be baptism, joining the fellowship, repairing a damaged relationship, beginning a life of prayer, learning to give, entering a season of study, using a neglected gift, or finally obeying something God has been saying for a long time. Spiritual growth often becomes unnecessarily mysterious when the real issue is that we already know the next act of obedience and have not taken it.

Mature disciples are not people who have no farther to go. They are people who keep responding to Jesus. They listen, trust, obey, repent when they fail, and continue walking with Him.

Disciples Are Formed Together

Jesus called people into relationship with Himself, and He also called them into relationship with one another. The first disciples learned while walking together, eating together, asking questions, making mistakes, and watching Jesus respond to real people in real situations. Their formation took place in community.

The same is true for us. Sermons and classes are valuable, but much of discipleship occurs in the ordinary spaces between formal lessons. It happens when an older believer encourages a younger one, when a family prays together, when a friend speaks truth with love, or when someone stays close during a painful season instead of offering a quick answer and disappearing.

At Cornerstone, worship gatherings, Bible study, prayer, ministry service, fellowship around a table, and personal relationships all contribute to discipleship. None of these experiences is meant to stand alone.

Together, they create places where truth can travel from the page into the person and become visible in daily life.

We need people who will encourage us, and sometimes we need people who love us enough to challenge us. Biblical community offers both. It reminds us that we are accepted by grace while refusing to leave us unchanged.

Every Disciple Has Something to Give

The Holy Spirit has given gifts to every believer for the good of the body and the work of Christ. Some gifts are visible from a platform, while many of the most important ones are exercised quietly through mercy, encouragement, hospitality, generosity, administration, prayer, wisdom, and faithful service.

No disciple should conclude, “I have nothing to offer.” There are no useless people in the body of Christ. God receives ordinary people, forms them by His grace, and makes their lives useful in ways they may never have imagined.

This is one reason Cornerstone values function more than titles. A title may clarify responsibility, but it does not create a gift or prove maturity. Some of the most fruitful ministry in any church is carried out by people who never hold a prominent position. They simply notice a need, respond with love, and faithfully use what God has placed in their hands.

The church has a responsibility to help believers discover, develop, and exercise their gifts. Believers also have a responsibility to make themselves available. We do not have to know everything before we begin, and we will not do everything perfectly. We learn by serving, and our service grows as our character grows.

Every Disciple Helps Someone Else Follow Jesus

The Christian life was never intended to terminate with us. Someone shared the Gospel with us, answered our questions, prayed for us, taught us Scripture, corrected us, or remained patient while we learned to walk with Christ. God used people in our formation, and He intends to use us in the formation of others.

Disciple-making is not limited to teaching a formal class. Parents disciple children. Friends strengthen friends. Older believers invest in younger believers. Couples encourage other couples. People who have endured grief, failure, recovery, or difficult seasons can help someone who is now walking through similar ground.

We are not trying to reproduce our personalities or gather people around ourselves. Our purpose is to help people hear Jesus, trust Jesus, obey Jesus, and remain with Jesus. A faithful disciple-maker is glad when the person being helped becomes less dependent on the mentor and more firmly dependent upon Christ.

Every believer should eventually be able to answer the question, “Who am I helping follow Jesus?” The answer may begin with one name, one conversation, or one relationship. That is enough. Kingdom multiplication often begins quietly, with one disciple taking responsibility for another person’s good.

The Church Equips; Disciples Live the Mission

The church must provide sound teaching, meaningful relationships, opportunities to serve, and leaders who equip rather than control. We should help people understand Scripture, discover gifts, practice ministry, and grow into responsibility. The purpose of equipping, however, is not to keep every expression of ministry inside the church building.

Disciples live most of their lives beyond the sanctuary. They go into homes, workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, businesses, hospitals, grocery stores, and countless ordinary places where people need the love and truth of Jesus Christ. Those places are not interruptions to ministry. They are where much of ministry happens.

The church gathers to worship, learn, pray, and encourage one another; then the church scatters as the people of God. Every disciple carries the presence and message of Christ into a part of the world that another member may never enter. The mission advances when ordinary believers recognize that they have been sent into the ordinary places of life.

A Disciple-Making Church

Our hope for Cornerstone is not merely that more people will attend, although we gladly welcome every person God sends. Our deeper prayer is that every person who comes among us will be invited into a life of following Jesus and, in time, will help someone else follow Him.

We will know this culture is growing when members take responsibility for their own spiritual formation, ministries equip people rather than simply use them, mature believers invest in others, children and students are treated as disciples now, and leaders measure success by the faithfulness they multiply rather than the attention they receive.

A disciple-making church outlives any personality or generation because disciples make disciples and leaders develop leaders.

“Working together, we exist to make disciples of Jesus through the love of Jesus Christ.” By His grace, we will continue until He comes.



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Protecting the Culture

*Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully
to the work of the Lord.
1 Corinthians 15:58, NIV*

Every Church Has a Culture

Every church has a culture, whether it has been intentionally cultivated or simply allowed to develop. Culture is more than the atmosphere in a room or the style of a worship service. It is the shared understanding of how we live, serve, decide, disagree, celebrate, and carry the mission together.

In simple terms, culture is what feels normal. It quietly answers the question, How do we do life together here? A policy may explain what a church permits, but culture teaches what the church actually values. People learn those values by watching what leaders emphasize, what members celebrate, what behavior is corrected, and what conduct is repeatedly overlooked.

At Cornerstone, our culture has been formed over more than thirty years of worship, prayer, teaching, service, fellowship, hardship, forgiveness, and faith. It is not perfect because we are not perfect. Yet God has patiently taught us convictions worth protecting: Christ belongs at the center, Scripture speaks with authority, discipleship requires obedience, people matter more than positions, and leadership exists to serve.

Culture is one of God's great gifts to a local church, but it is also one of our greatest stewardships. Every generation receives something it did

not create by itself and then decides, through daily choices, what the next generation will inherit.

Culture Is Formed Through Repetition

Healthy culture is rarely created by one dramatic moment. It grows through ordinary actions repeated until they become part of a congregation's character. A sermon is prepared faithfully, a visitor is welcomed warmly, a child is treated with dignity, a grieving family receives care, a conflict is handled honestly, and a leader gives credit rather than seeking it.

None of these moments may appear historic when they occur. Taken together, however, they teach people what kind of church we are becoming. Culture is not built by our intentions alone; it is built by what we repeatedly practice.

The same is true in the wrong direction. One unchecked attitude, one habit of gossip, one leader who is allowed to mistreat people, or one ministry that continually works against the mission can slowly reshape what feels normal. What we repeatedly tolerate, we eventually teach.

This is why small decisions matter. Every choice either strengthens the culture we say we value or quietly weakens it.

We Protect Convictions, Not Preferences

Protecting culture does not mean resisting every change. A church can preserve familiar methods so fiercely that it loses the mission those methods were meant to serve. We are not called to keep everything exactly as it has always been; we are called to remain faithful to Christ.

Methods will change as people, technology, communities, and opportunities change. Ministries may begin, flourish for a season, and

eventually conclude. Future generations may use language, music, schedules, and tools that feel unfamiliar to us. None of that necessarily threatens the culture.

The real danger comes when preferences are treated as convictions or convictions are treated as preferences. We can release a method without releasing the mission. We can welcome a new idea without surrendering biblical truth. We can honor the past without requiring the future to reproduce it.

Because we treasure Christ, we protect His centrality. Because we treasure Scripture, we protect truth. Because we treasure discipleship, we protect spiritual formation. Because we treasure people, we protect relationships marked by dignity, compassion, honesty, and love. Because we treasure the future, we continue developing women and men, children and students, servants and leaders who will carry the Gospel farther than we can.

Every Leader Teaches the Culture

Every person entrusted with influence becomes a teacher of culture. Pastors, deacons, ministry leaders, teachers, musicians, volunteers, and longtime members all show others what matters by the way they live. Culture is often caught before it is taught.

This means leaders cannot preserve humility while leading with pride, cultivate truth while avoiding honest conversations, or teach service while expecting special treatment. People may remember what we said, but they will be shaped more deeply by what they consistently saw in us.

Leaders protect culture when they listen well, keep their word, welcome correction, honor other people's gifts, handle conflict without cruelty, and admit when they are wrong. Integrity cannot be delegated, and

humility cannot be outsourced. The values we want future generations to embrace must first become visible in us.

This responsibility belongs to more than those with titles. A faithful member who welcomes newcomers, prays consistently, encourages children, serves without recognition, and speaks about the church with love may influence the culture more than that person realizes. Everybody helps teach what is normal here.

We Tell the Stories Faithfully

God repeatedly instructed His people to remember and to tell the next generation what He had done. Memory protects identity. When churches forget their story, they can preserve activities without remembering why those activities mattered.

Cornerstone has stories worth telling. We should remember the seasons when we worshiped in rented spaces, the prayers God answered, the needs He supplied, the people He carried through grief, and the ways He sustained this fellowship for more than thirty years. We should remember the steady prayer offered on Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings, the Scripture and prayer shared through Morning Manna, the generosity extended to people in need, and the quiet service of members whose names may never appear in a history book.

We tell these stories to glorify God, not to make heroes of ourselves. Every faithful servant was a person through whom God chose to work. Every testimony reminds us that the same Lord who sustained yesterday's church will be faithful to tomorrow's church.

Our stories should not trap future leaders in the past. They should give them courage for the future. When the next generation hears how God met us in uncertainty, they learn that they can trust Him in circumstances we may never face.

We Hold Traditions with Open Hands

Traditions can become beautiful servants because they carry memory, teach truth, and connect generations. A familiar hymn may hold the testimony of people who sang it through decades of joy and sorrow. A prayer gathering may remind us that dependence upon God has always been central to our life together.

Yet even good traditions become dangerous when they are treated as masters. Wisdom requires us to distinguish between the truth a tradition preserves and the particular method through which that truth has been expressed. Prayer is essential; the hour at which we gather to pray may change. Fellowship is essential; the way we organize a meal may change. Teaching Scripture is essential; the tools used to teach it will certainly change.

At Cornerstone, we gladly preserve traditions that help people treasure Christ, know Scripture, love one another, and live faithfully. We also give future leaders permission to release practices that no longer serve those purposes. Holding the past with gratitude does not require gripping it with fear.

We honor those who came before us by continuing their faithfulness, not merely by repeating their methods.

We Welcome Growth Without Losing Ourselves

We pray that God will continue drawing people to Himself and adding them to His Church. Growth is a gift, but growth also tests culture. As more people come, relationships require greater intention, communication becomes more important, and leaders must work harder to ensure that the mission remains clear.

The temptation is to exchange depth for speed, people for programs, or faithfulness for popularity. We refuse to accept those as necessary tradeoffs. We desire growth that deepens discipleship, strengthens families, develops leaders, expands generosity, and makes Christ more visible in our community.

Numerical growth can be celebrated, but it cannot become the master measurement. A crowded room does not necessarily mean a healthy church, and a smaller congregation is not excused from fruitfulness. The question is whether people are encountering Jesus, becoming obedient disciples, and helping others follow Him.

Healthy growth does not erase a church's identity. It gives more people the opportunity to share in a culture centered upon Christ.

We Correct Drift Before It Becomes Decline

Churches rarely abandon their deepest convictions in a single decision. Drift usually occurs quietly through small compromises, neglected relationships, unchallenged attitudes, and ministries that remain active after their purpose has been forgotten. Over time, what once seemed minor begins to shape the whole congregation.

Protecting culture therefore requires regular and honest examination. Are we still helping people treasure Christ? Are we handling Scripture faithfully? Are leaders serving with humility? Are people being valued, equipped, and cared for? Are our ministries supporting the mission, or are we maintaining activity because no one wants to ask a difficult question?

These questions are not signs of disloyalty. They are acts of stewardship. Healthy churches remain teachable, repent when they discover drift, repair what has been damaged, and return to Christ with renewed obedience.

The answer to cultural drift is not nostalgia. Looking backward may help us remember what mattered, but only present obedience can restore health. We do not recover faithfulness by trying to relive yesterday; we recover it by listening to Christ today.

What the Next Pastor Should Inherit

Someday another pastor will shepherd Cornerstone Fellowship Church. When that day comes, I pray that the next pastor receives more than maintained facilities, organized finances, and functioning ministries. Those things matter, but they are not the church's greatest inheritance.

I pray that the next pastor inherits a people who treasure Jesus, trust Scripture, pray before they plan, love one another through disagreement, serve their community, welcome children and students, value women and men as gifted servants of Christ, and remain willing to follow wherever the Lord leads. I pray that leader inherits a church in which titles are held loosely, truth is spoken lovingly, generosity is normal, and making disciples remains everybody's work.

Buildings can be constructed in a few years. Healthy culture requires generations of teaching, modeling, correcting, forgiving, and beginning again. What God has patiently formed among us should never be treated casually.

The best gift we can offer future leadership is not a congregation trained to depend upon one personality. It is a mature people who know how to follow Jesus together.

Our Commitment

Cornerstone Fellowship Church accepts the responsibility of protecting the culture God has formed among us. We do so not because every part of our culture is perfect or because every familiar practice must be preserved, but because the Lord has taught us convictions that continually point us toward Jesus Christ.

We will remain humble enough to learn, courageous enough to change, and faithful enough to protect what matters. Every ministry, decision, initiative, and leadership transition should be tested by a simple question: Will this help future generations treasure Christ and follow Him more faithfully?

When the answer is yes, we should move forward with courage. When the answer is no, we should be willing to let it go without resentment. We are not preserving a museum or protecting the comfort of one generation. We are stewarding a Gospel witness that belongs to Christ.

Protecting the culture means preparing the future. By God's grace, we will pass on a church that remembers His faithfulness, remains anchored in His truth, loves people well, and stays ready to follow Jesus wherever He leads.

Stewardship of the Soul: Protecting Our Church Culture

HOW CULTURE IS FORMED

CAUGHT BEFORE IT IS TAUGHT



Leaders teach culture more through their consistent actions than through their words.



While policy explains what is permitted, culture teaches what the church actually values.

BUILT THROUGH REPETITION



Culture grows through ordinary actions repeated until they become part of a congregation's character.

Church culture is a shared understanding, formed through daily repetition and the protection of core convictions.

HOW WE PROTECT THE INHERITANCE

CONVICTIONS VS. PREFERENCES



We change methods to serve the mission while never surrendering biblical truth.

MEMORY PROTECTS IDENTITY



Telling stories of God's faithfulness gives the next generation courage for the future.

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE



The best gift for future leadership is a people who follow Jesus together.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Succession as Stewardship

“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.”

2 Timothy 2:2, NIV

Every Leader Serves for a Season

Every Christian leader is temporary. That truth may sound unsettling at first, especially when a pastor or ministry leader has served faithfully for many years. Yet it is not a reason for fear. It is one of the clearest reminders that Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His Church.

Pastors, deacons, teachers, ministry leaders, musicians, and faithful servants all receive an assignment for a season. We should value every season God gives, but we must never confuse a long assignment with permanent ownership. The church belongs to Christ, not to the person currently carrying the greatest responsibility.

This conviction brings humility and freedom. It keeps leaders from building personal kingdoms and congregations from placing upon a leader the weight only Jesus can bear. We can honor those who serve without making them the center or believing God's work depends entirely upon them.

One day every responsibility we hold will pass into other hands. Faithful stewardship means serving well while it is ours and preparing others to serve when it is no longer ours.

Succession Begins Long Before Transition

Succession is often treated as a difficult conversation to begin when a leader announces a retirement, accepts another calling, or can no longer continue. By then, however, a church may already be late. Healthy succession does not begin with a vacancy. It begins with discipleship.

Every time we teach Scripture, invite a younger believer into a conversation, explain a decision, or entrust meaningful responsibility to another person, we are preparing the future. Parents who help children follow Jesus, teachers who develop other teachers, and ministry leaders who make room for new servants are all participating in succession.

This is not merely an organizational strategy. It is the pattern Paul gave Timothy: receive truth faithfully, live it openly, and entrust it to reliable people who will teach others. The Gospel travels from one generation to another through people who understand that what they have received was never meant to stop with them.

At Cornerstone, succession should be part of our normal life together. We should not wait until a transition becomes urgent before asking who is growing, who is faithful, who is teachable, and whom God may be preparing. The strongest transitions are usually the fruit of years of quiet investment.

We Prepare People, Not Replacements

There is a difference between preparing people and searching for replacements. A replacement is often expected to preserve a position exactly as it has been. A developing leader is encouraged to become the person God has called and gifted that individual to be.

Faithful succession does not require the next teacher, deacon, ministry leader, or pastor to imitate the person who served before. God forms

women and men with different experiences, abilities, personalities, and insights, then calls them to serve the same unchanging Gospel in their generation.

Our responsibility is larger than filling positions. We want to cultivate mature disciples who know Christ, handle Scripture faithfully, love people, welcome correction, and serve without needing recognition. Some may carry formal titles. Others may lead through hospitality, prayer, generosity, mentoring, administration, or quiet faithfulness.

Not everyone we develop will remain at Cornerstone. Some will move to another community, strengthen another congregation, serve on a mission field, or begin a ministry we did not imagine. We can release them with joy because the Kingdom of God is larger than our church. If Christ is honored and people are served faithfully, our investment has not been lost.

Leadership Is Formed Through Relationship

Policies, calendars, budgets, and ministry procedures should be documented clearly. Yet the qualities that matter most in leadership cannot be transferred through paperwork alone.

Wisdom grows as people watch mature believers make decisions without panic. Discernment develops when someone is invited into the questions behind a decision, not merely told the answer. Courage is learned during difficult conversations, compassion in caring for hurting people, and humility when a leader admits a mistake and changes course.

Jesus formed His disciples through shared life. Paul did more than send Timothy instructions; he allowed Timothy to travel, serve, suffer, and learn beside him. Throughout Scripture, responsibility is often transferred after relationship has already shaped the person who will receive it.

Established leaders must allow emerging leaders close enough to see more than the polished parts of ministry. We should explain what we are learning and let others observe how dependence upon God shapes ordinary decisions. People do not need flawless examples. They need faithful ones.

We Share Responsibility Before We Have To

Long-serving leaders can become so accustomed to carrying responsibility that sharing it feels inefficient. It may be faster to complete a task than to teach someone else, and the work may not be done exactly as we would do it. Learning requires room to try, receive guidance, make adjustments, and grow.

If we only release responsibility when we are exhausted or unavailable, we have missed many opportunities to disciple. Delegation is not simply a way to reduce a leader's workload. It is a way to increase another believer's capacity.

Sharing responsibility does not mean abandoning people to assignments they are not ready to carry. Healthy leaders provide clarity, support, and honest feedback. They begin with appropriate responsibility, entrust more as character and competence grow, and remain available without taking the work back at the first sign of imperfection.

This requires patience from the congregation. If we say we want new leaders but punish every early mistake, people will remain spectators. Growth happens where standards are clear, correction is gracious, and faithful effort is encouraged.

A ministry that can function only when one particular person is present is not yet prepared for the future. Healthy leaders do not prove their value by becoming indispensable. They demonstrate stewardship by helping others become dependable.

We Celebrate the Growth of Others

Succession exposes what is happening in a leader's heart. It is one thing to say we want others to grow; it is another to rejoice when they become capable of doing what we have done, perhaps even more effectively.

Kingdom leadership has no need to compete with the people it develops. When another person teaches Scripture faithfully, offers a wiser solution, connects with a younger generation, or carries a responsibility with excellence, we should be grateful. Their growth does not diminish our service. It reveals that our service is bearing fruit.

Older leaders have experience the church needs. Younger leaders may see possibilities the church has not considered. One generation brings memory and another fresh perspective; both need humility to listen. The goal is not control but following Christ together and preparing the church for faithfulness beyond our own years.

John the Baptist understood this when he said that Christ must increase while he decreased. That is not a bitter surrender. It is the joy of a servant whose deepest desire is for Jesus to be seen. We do not have to remain at the center when Christ is already there.

The Pastor Is Not the Vision

Cornerstone should be grateful for every faithful pastor God provides. Sound teaching, spiritual care, wise direction, and courageous decisions can strengthen a congregation for generations. We should pray for pastors, receive biblical leadership, and honor faithful service.

Still, no pastor is the vision of the church. Jesus Christ is our vision. A pastor is called to help the congregation see Christ more clearly, follow Him more faithfully, and join His mission more fully. When the leader

becomes the center, both the pastor and the people are placed in spiritual danger.

I am grateful for the privilege of serving Cornerstone, but this church must never be taught to depend upon my personality, preferences, or presence. If my years of service are faithful, they should help Cornerstone become more dependent upon Christ, not more dependent upon me. The same is true of every leader in every ministry.

Someday another pastor will preach from this pulpit, care for these families, and guide this church into a future I cannot see. That pastor should have room to lead faithfully while honoring the Gospel, mission, and biblical convictions entrusted to the church.

We honor former leaders best when we thank God for their service without asking future leaders to become them. Comparison can make transition unnecessarily painful. Christ remains the same even when the servant, style, and season change.

Preparing for a Faithful Transition

Leadership transition deserves prayer, honesty, patience, and preparation, never secrecy, personal ambition, or panic. When transition becomes necessary, the church should understand the process, know who carries responsibility, and have opportunities to pray and participate.

Those leaving leadership should be honored without being treated as owners who control the future. Those receiving leadership should be welcomed without being expected to erase the past. The congregation should resist rumors, factions, and premature judgments. Transition reveals whether we trust the Lord to shepherd His people through more than one human leader.

Not every transition will feel easy. Grief may accompany gratitude because relationships matter. New leadership may bring different emphases, methods, or rhythms. Honest questions should be welcomed and biblical convictions kept clear, but change itself is not evidence that something has gone wrong.

For more than thirty years, Cornerstone has been sustained through many seasons. Ministries have changed, people have come and gone, and the needs of our community have continued to develop. Through it all, Jesus has remained faithful. The Lord who carried this church yesterday will not become less faithful tomorrow.

A Legacy Worth Leaving

Every leader leaves something behind. It may be a healthy ministry, an unresolved conflict, a pattern of prayer, a financial burden, a strengthened family, or a group of disciples prepared to serve. Time eventually reveals whether a leader built around personal influence or invested in people who could carry the work forward.

The greatest legacy is not a building, an attendance record, or a list of accomplishments. Those things may be useful, and we should steward them well, but they cannot replace mature disciples. Faithful leaders leave behind people who know how to seek God, understand His Word, love one another, make wise decisions, and continue the mission without constant reference to the person who once led them.

I pray that future generations will remember those who served Cornerstone with affection and gratitude. More than that, I pray they will inherit the fruit of that service: a church centered upon Christ, grounded in Scripture, devoted to prayer, generous toward people in need, serious about discipleship, and ready to develop still another generation of leaders.

The best testimony of our leadership will not be that the church could not continue without us. It will be that, by the grace of God, we prepared His people well.

Our Commitment

At Cornerstone Fellowship Church, we receive succession as part of our stewardship. We will identify and encourage faithful people, share responsibility with wisdom, and create room for women and men of every generation to grow in service. We will document what should be preserved, explain the convictions behind our decisions, and cultivate relationships through which character and wisdom can be formed.

We will not build ministries around personalities or confuse familiarity with faithfulness. We will honor those who have served, welcome those whom God raises next, and keep our confidence in Jesus Christ. Our mission will remain: working together, we exist to make disciples of Jesus through the love of Jesus Christ. Our assignments are temporary, but Christ's Church belongs to Him forever. We serve our season with gratitude, prepare the next generation with generosity, and trust the Lord with every chapter that follows.

Succession as Stewardship: Preparing the Next Generation

Succession is the act of entrusting ministry responsibilities to reliable people who can then teach others. It is a continuous cycle of discipleship that ensures the church remains focused on Christ's leadership rather than individual personalities.



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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Measuring Faithfulness

*“Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must
prove faithful.”
1 Corinthians 4:2, NIV*

Success Must Be Measured Carefully

Every church measures something. We count attendance, review budgets, track participation, and notice whether ministries are growing or declining. Churches may also measure online engagement and community reach. None of this is inherently wrong. Good information can help faithful leaders make wise decisions.

The danger comes when a useful measurement becomes our definition of success. A full room can encourage us, but it cannot tell us whether hearts are being transformed. A balanced budget may reflect careful stewardship, but it cannot tell us whether generosity is growing. A busy calendar proves that activity is occurring; it does not prove that disciples are maturing.

At Cornerstone, we measure what helps us serve the mission Christ has entrusted to us. Numbers tell part of the story, but not all of it. We ask not only, “Are more people coming?” but also, “Are people becoming more like Jesus?” We ask not only, “Is this ministry active?” but also, “Is it helping people take faithful steps with Christ?”

Measurement is a servant, not a master. It should help us see clearly, give thanks honestly, correct wisely, and steward faithfully.

We count because people matter, not to make the church appear important. Every number represents a person, responsibility, or resource entrusted to us. Changes in participation, baptisms, or giving should lead us to ask thoughtful questions and respond faithfully. Yet numbers require humility. Growth does not always mean health, and decline does not always mean failure. One ministry may become smaller because it sent people into service; another may grow while neglecting discipleship. Information becomes wisdom only when considered prayerfully and in the light of Scripture.

Faithfulness Before Fruitfulness

Fruit matters. Jesus taught that His disciples would bear fruit, and a church should desire changed lives, strengthened families, developed leaders, and people brought to faith. We must never use faithfulness as an excuse for carelessness or a refusal to examine our ministry.

Yet Scripture also teaches that lasting fruit grows from abiding in Christ. We plant and water, but God gives the increase. Our responsibility is to obey faithfully, serve diligently, and trust Him with outcomes we cannot manufacture.

This protects the church from manipulation. We do not pressure people into decisions to report impressive results, change Scripture's message to gain approval, or treat another congregation as

competition. Comparison makes us proud when our numbers look larger and discouraged when they do not. Neither helps us follow Jesus.

Faithfulness asks a better question: Are we obeying what Christ has called us to do with the people, gifts, opportunities, and resources He has placed in our hands? If we can answer that question honestly, we can work with diligence and rest in God's sovereignty. We give Him our best without pretending the results belong to us.

What We Celebrate Reveals What We Value

People learn what a church values by listening to what it celebrates. If the loudest applause is reserved for visible growth, large gifts, and public leadership, we may teach that quiet faithfulness matters less. God's Kingdom often advances through obedience that never appears in a report.

At Cornerstone, we rejoice when someone places faith in Jesus Christ and publicly identifies with Him through baptism. We celebrate when a believer returns to fellowship, a marriage begins healing, a child learns to trust God, or a family discovers the joy of generosity. We give thanks when someone forgives rather than becoming bitter, when a difficult conversation produces reconciliation, and when a disciple begins helping another person follow Jesus.

We also celebrate the servant who arrives early, the person who prays without recognition, the teacher who prepares for a small class, and the member who notices someone others missed. These acts reveal the character of Christ being formed among His people.

Celebration teaches culture. When we tell these stories, we remind one another that heaven's values are often different from the world's. What matters most is not being noticed. It is being faithful.

Questions Worth Asking

Every ministry should periodically ask why it exists, whom it serves, and whether it is helping fulfill the mission. These conversations should not wait until something fails. Regular evaluation is healthy stewardship.

We can ask whether people are treasuring Jesus more deeply and understanding Scripture more clearly. Are they learning to pray, obey, forgive, give, serve, and walk by faith? Are relationships becoming healthier? Are members discovering their gifts? Are new leaders emerging?

Are children and students being formed as disciples? Are people coming to faith, and are new believers being helped to grow?

We should ask practical questions. Is the ministry using time and money wisely? Are its leaders healthy? Does it strengthen the whole church or compete for attention and resources? Is it meeting a real need, or are we maintaining it because it has always existed?

Honest questions are not attacks upon faithful servants. They help connect effort to a clear purpose. Evaluation requires prayer, gratitude, reliable information, and willingness to change. The goal is not to assign blame but to become more faithful.

Measuring Spiritual Health

Spiritual health cannot always be charted, but it can be observed. Healthy churches develop recognizable patterns: joy in worship, hunger for God's Word, dependence upon prayer, generosity, and love. Leaders serve humbly. Members remain faithful during trials. People repent, forgive, reconcile, and expect God to remain at work.

These qualities are recognized over time. One joyful service does not prove health, just as one difficult season does not prove failure. We look for direction and consistency. Are we becoming more prayerful? Are conflicts handled more biblically? Are members moving from attendance into relationship and service? Are people learning to trust Christ when life hurts?

Spiritual health also requires truth. Peace is not unity if difficult issues are ignored. Enthusiasm is not maturity if people resist correction. Biblical knowledge is not transformation if it produces pride rather than love. The Spirit's fruit must shape how we treat one another.

The healthiest church is not the one with no problems. It is the one that keeps bringing its problems into the light of Christ, receives His correction, and continues growing in obedience.

Measuring Leadership

Leadership should never be evaluated by visibility alone. A gifted communicator may gather attention while lacking the character required for long-term trust. Another person may serve far from the platform while steadily strengthening people and ministries. Influence matters, but Christlike influence matters more.

When evaluating leaders, we consider character and fruit. Is this leader becoming more like Christ? Does this person handle Scripture faithfully, keep commitments, welcome correction, and live with integrity? Do people feel valued rather than used? Does the leader strengthen unity, develop others, and steward authority responsibly?

We also ask whether leaders are healthy. Constant exhaustion is not proof of devotion. Neglected families, unaddressed sin, and unsustainable workloads harm both the leader and church. Faithful leadership includes rest, shared responsibility, appropriate boundaries, and receiving care.

The goal of evaluation is not perfection. Every leader is still being formed. We are looking for humility, teachability, faithfulness, and growth. A healthy leader does not need to know everything, but must remain willing to learn.

Measuring the Next Generation

One of the clearest indicators of a church's health is what is happening among its children, students, and young adults. They are not merely waiting to become part of the church someday. They belong to the life and mission of the church now.

Are they learning Scripture, discovering prayer, and developing personal trust in Jesus rather than borrowing the faith of adults? Can they ask honest questions? Are they building relationships with mature believers, discovering gifts, serving meaningfully, and learning that following Christ reaches every part of life?

We must strengthen parents and caregivers as disciple-makers. The church supports children's spiritual formation but cannot replace the daily influence of home. Healthy ministry equips families, welcomes those whose homes are spiritually complicated, and surrounds young people with trustworthy believers who model Christ.

A large youth event may encourage us, but the deeper question is what remains afterward. If the next generation treasures Jesus, loves His Church, serves others, and carries the Gospel forward, the future is being strengthened today.

Measuring Our Community Impact

Christ's people should make a difference where God has placed them. We should care whether our neighbors know Cornerstone as a church that tells the truth, keeps its word, treats people with dignity, and shows compassion.

Community impact includes feeding someone who is hungry, supporting a family in crisis, encouraging a school, visiting the sick, and partnering wisely with others who serve the common good. It also includes faithfully sharing the Gospel. Compassion and proclamation belong together because Jesus cared for whole people.

We ask whether people trust us, families are strengthened, and those in need receive meaningful care. Are we listening to the community or assuming what it needs? Are we present beyond special events? Does our generosity make Christ's love visible without turning people into publicity?

If Cornerstone disappeared tomorrow and the community scarcely noticed, we would have more work to do. We are not here simply to occupy a building. We are here as witnesses and servants of Jesus Christ.

Measuring Ourselves Honestly

The most important evaluation may be the one each of us conducts before the Lord. It is easier to assess a ministry than to ask whether our own hearts are changing.

Am I closer to Christ than I was a year ago? Am I quicker to repent and slower to defend myself? Do I love more deeply, forgive more freely, and give more generously? Am I more faithful in prayer and willing to obey when it costs something? Can those who know me best see more of Jesus in me?

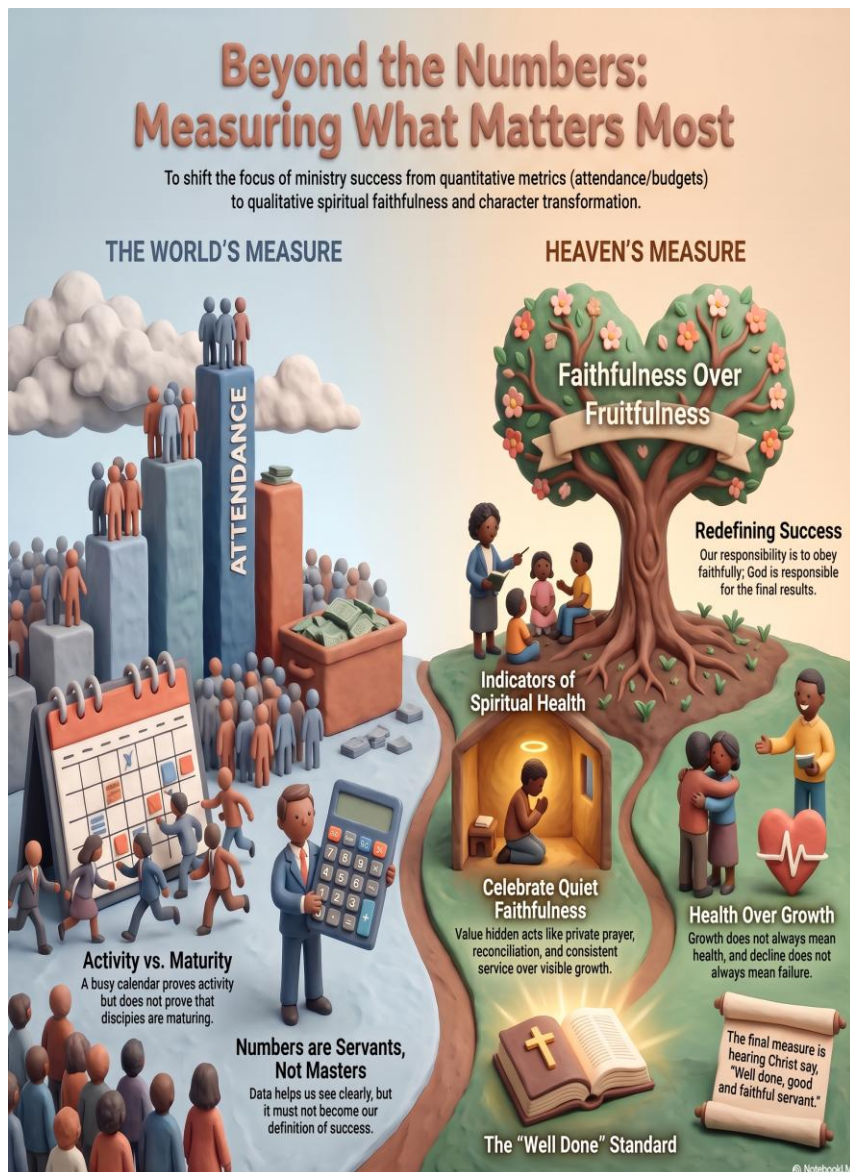
These questions are not meant to produce despair. They bring us into the light so the Holy Spirit can continue His work. Growth is often gradual, and none of us has arrived. Yet the God who began His work remains faithful to complete it.

We are not measuring ourselves against someone else's journey. We are asking whether grace is making us increasingly translucent—less occupied with displaying ourselves and more willing for others to see Christ through us.

Our Commitment

At Cornerstone Fellowship Church, we will measure our work with wisdom and humility. We will count what is useful, steward resources with integrity, and ask difficult questions before circumstances force us to ask them. Above all, we will pursue faithfulness, celebrating changed lives more than impressive statistics, obedience more than activity, and Christlike character more than recognition. Our goal is not merely a

growing church but a growing people who treasure Jesus, serve one another, and make disciples through His love. When our service is complete, the final measure will not be how impressive our ministries appeared. We long to hear Jesus say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” That is the measure that matters most.



CHAPTER NINETEEN

Kingdom Outcomes: Looking Toward 2040

*“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we
ask or imagine...”
Ephesians 3:20–21, NIV*

We Plan with Open Hands

Scripture encourages wise planning, but it never permits us to imagine that the future is ours to control. We can study, prepare, budget, develop leaders, and make responsible decisions. Yet every plan remains beneath the authority of Jesus Christ and dependent upon the grace of God.

The vision described in this chapter is therefore not a prediction or a promise that every hope will unfold exactly as written. It is a prayerful aspiration. We do not presume to know everything the Lord intends to accomplish through Cornerstone Fellowship Church between now and 2040. We simply want to be ready to obey when He opens a door and wise enough to strengthen what He has already placed in our hands.

Faith plans, prays, obeys, and trusts God with the results. That posture protects us from two opposite errors. We will not drift into the future without preparation, and we will not grip our plans so tightly that we resist the Lord's direction. We plan with open hands because the church belongs to Christ.

Our deepest hope is not that every ministry grows larger. It is that Cornerstone grows more faithful. If attendance increases but discipleship remains shallow, we will have missed the point. If facilities improve but

prayer weakens, we will not have advanced. Kingdom outcomes must always be measured by people treasuring Jesus, following His Word, loving one another, and joining His mission.

Our Three-Year Horizon: Strengthening the Foundation

The first horizon calls us to strengthen the church from within. Healthy ministry grows from healthy disciples, so our priority is not rapid expansion but deeper formation. We want every part of Cornerstone to help people take their next faithful step with Christ.

During these years, the Cornerstone Path should become clear throughout the congregation. New believers need help establishing their faith. Growing disciples need biblical community and opportunities to serve. Mature believers need to be equipped to disciple others. Every ministry should understand its place in that process rather than operate as an isolated activity.

Every member should understand that the mission belongs to the whole church and be encouraged to use spiritual gifts faithfully. New members should be introduced not only to Cornerstone's history and programs but also to our Christ-centered identity, mission, values, and way of serving together.

Leadership development must be strengthened at every level. Pastors, deacons, teachers, ministry leaders, and emerging servants need training, support, and honest feedback. We want ministries that share responsibility, develop people, and continue faithfully through changing seasons.

Our children and students remain central. We desire every young person to be known, taught Scripture, welcomed into church life, and surrounded by trustworthy adults who model joyful obedience. Parents and caregivers should also be equipped to disciple at home.

If these foundations become stronger, future growth will have depth and stability. We are not delaying mission while we work upon the foundation. Strengthening disciples is the mission.

Our Five-Year Horizon: Expanding Our Influence

As disciples mature, healthy ministry should naturally reach farther. Our five-year horizon is not about making Cornerstone prominent. It is about making Christ more visible through a congregation that is faithfully present in its community.

We pray that our neighbors will increasingly know Cornerstone as a church that loves people, teaches Scripture faithfully, develops leaders, strengthens families, and serves without demanding recognition. We want people to trust our word because we keep it and to recognize our compassion because love has become visible in the way we live.

This will require flourishing ministry among children, students, and young adults; healthy small groups and discipleship relationships; stronger leadership development; and increasing opportunities for people to use their gifts. It will also require listening carefully to our community so our service addresses real needs rather than merely repeating familiar activities.

We desire deeper partnerships with schools, ministries, congregations, and community organizations where shared work can strengthen people and honor Christ. We also pray for expanding relationships beyond our immediate community, including mission partners and international ministries through whom the Gospel is proclaimed and practical care is offered.

Compassion and evangelism must remain together. We will feed, encourage, visit, support, and serve because Christ's love compels us. We will also speak clearly about Jesus because human need reaches deeper than any program can touch. Our prayer is not simply that more people attend

Cornerstone. It is that more people encounter Jesus because Cornerstone is faithfully present.

Our Ten-Year Horizon: A Church That Outlives Its Leaders

The ten-year horizon asks a more enduring question: What kind of church will future generations inherit? Buildings, programs, and technology cannot sustain a congregation that has lost its center.

By God's grace, we envision disciples making disciples and leaders developing leaders. Families help children follow Christ. Students become servants and servants become leaders. Older and younger believers walk together, sharing wisdom and fresh perspective. Every generation has something to receive and something to give.

We pray that generosity becomes normal, prayer remains foundational, Scripture remains authoritative, and Jesus remains central. We desire peaceful leadership transitions because our confidence rests in Christ rather than personalities. New ministries should emerge when needs and gifts become clear, while completed ministries are released with gratitude.

This future will be formed through ordinary faithfulness: a parent praying with a child, a leader sharing responsibility, a member welcoming a stranger, a teacher preparing carefully, and a believer forgiving an offense.

We are preparing a church our children—and their children—can call home. We cannot decide every method they will use. We can pass on biblical convictions, a healthy culture, and a living example of following Jesus together.

Beyond 2040

Our vision does not end with a date. Dates help us prepare and hold ourselves accountable, but the true horizon of the Church extends until Jesus Christ returns. If the Lord gives Cornerstone another fifty years or another hundred, our prayer will remain the same.

May this church continue proclaiming Christ, making disciples, serving the community, raising leaders, loving people, and walking by faith rather than sight. May future generations adapt their methods without abandoning the mission, honor the past without becoming trapped by it, and hold every resource with gratitude rather than entitlement.

Those generations may not remember our names. They may know little about the rented spaces, financial struggles, answered prayers, victories, and disappointments that shaped Cornerstone's early decades. That is all right. The story has never been mainly about us. If they treasure Jesus, trust His Word, and help another generation follow Him, the most important part of our testimony will remain alive.

Dreams Worth Praying For

Some dreams cannot be scheduled, funded, or achieved through planning. Only God can form the people we long to become. Our greatest dreams must therefore become our deepest prayers.

We pray that Cornerstone will be known more for humility than prominence, generosity than prosperity, discipleship than attendance, and prayer than programming. We desire to be more concerned with Christ than personality, more willing to send than gather, more eager to serve than be served, and more devoted to faithfulness than fame.

Attendance, programs, resources, and influence can become useful tools when surrendered to Christ. The question is which serves the other.

We want programs to serve discipleship, resources to serve mission, influence to point toward Jesus, and growth to create opportunities for ministry.

If God grants a larger church, may He also give deeper love. If resources expand, may generosity expand with them. If He opens new doors, may humility keep us dependent. Whatever comes, we want Christ's character increasingly visible among us.

What Success Will Look Like

When people speak about Cornerstone decades from now, we hope they will not speak first about buildings, budgets, technology, or even longevity. Those may be part of the story, but they are not the testimony we seek.

We hope people will say that Cornerstone loved Jesus and loved one another, taught God's Word faithfully, served the community generously, developed leaders, prepared the next generation, walked by faith, and stayed with Christ through every season. We hope people who were wounded found patient care, those searching for truth heard the Gospel clearly, and those ready to grow found believers willing to walk beside them.

Success will look like mature disciples helping others follow Jesus. It will look like families strengthened, leaders serving without pride, ministries working together, and members carrying Christ's love into ordinary places. It will look like repentance when we drift, courage when obedience is costly, and gratitude when God produces fruit we could never create.

If these things become our testimony, our stewardship will have honored the Lord. We do not need to become famous. We need to be found faithful.

A Charge to Future Leaders

Future leader, never become more concerned with protecting an institution than pursuing Christ. Churches become museums when all their energy preserves yesterday. Honor those who came before, but remember that their faithfulness was obedience in their day. You must obey Christ in yours.

Protect the Gospel, unity, holiness, the vulnerable, and the mission—not comfort that interferes with obedience. Pressure will come to soften truth, entertain rather than disciple, and measure success by visibility instead of transformation. Resist with humility, courage, and love.

The church belongs to Christ. You are not its owner; you are its steward. Love people deeply. Shepherd patiently. Teach faithfully. Correct gently. Lead courageously. Repent quickly. Pray continually. Serve joyfully. Finish humbly.

The next generation is watching. People learn more from what they repeatedly see than from what you tell them. When your assignment ends, do not ask how many people followed you. Ask how many followed Jesus more faithfully because they walked beside you.

Then pass the responsibility with joy. The Chief Shepherd was faithful before your service began, and He will remain faithful after it ends.

A Prayer for 2040

Gracious Father, may every generation that gathers as Cornerstone Fellowship Church treasure Jesus Christ above all else. Protect us from pride and guard us from drift. Keep us faithful to Your Word, dependent upon prayer, responsive to Your Spirit, and willing to obey wherever You lead.

Teach us to love deeply. Strengthen families, restore the wandering, encourage the weary, comfort the brokenhearted, and save the lost. Make us generous with our time, gifts, resources, and lives. Let our community experience Christ's love through Your people.

Raise leaders we cannot yet imagine and laborers for fields we may never see. Give the next generation courage to carry the Gospel farther. May they receive what was faithful, correct what was flawed, and follow Jesus wholeheartedly in circumstances known only to You.

May future generations know You more faithfully because we chose to obey You today. Keep us walking the Path, trusting Your promises, serving with joy, and becoming increasingly translucent until the beauty of Christ shines through His Church.

Now to You who are able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to Your power at work among us, be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout every generation, forever and ever. Amen.

CORNERSTONE 2040: FAITHFUL TO THE FINISH

Trusting God to build a church that treasures Jesus above all.



STRENGTHEN THE FOUNDATION

DEEPER FORMATION
Help every member take their
next faithful step with Christ.

BUILD A LEGACY



OUTLIVES LEADERS
Equip the next generation to inherit a
healthy culture of biblical convictions.



EXPAND INFLUENCE



VISIBLE COMPASSION
Reach neighbors by serving
without demanding recognition.

MEASURE SUCCESS



MEASURE SUCCESS

**BY FAITHFULNESS,
NOT ATTENDANCE.**

True victory is found in people following
Jesus and loving one another for generations.