

PHILIPPIANS: JOURNEY INTO JOY

2024 LENT DEVOTIONAL & PRAYER GUIDE



INTRODUCTION

We're excited that you're using this special devotional and prayer guide as part of your Lent commitment in 2024.

In connection with our *Journey Into Joy* sermon series, this guide explores various passages in Philippians and leads you into meaningful times of prayer and reflection for both your personal walk with Jesus as well as Cornerstone's life and mission as a local church (and your part in it).

Each day's reading from Philippians will connect with one of Cornerstone's seven **distinctives** (*Thinking Theologically, Unity-in-Diversity, God-in-the-Neighbourhood, Biblical Hospitality, Discipleship Pathway, Leadership Development, Team Leadership*). Cornerstone's distinctives consist of a mix of values and practices that combine to make us the unique church that God has called and shaped us to be. They are what makes Cornerstone – *Cornerstone!* The reflections that you'll find in this guide regarding our distinctives are written by members of Cornerstone's pastoral team.

If you're newer to this church (and we praise God that so many newcomers have joined us in recent years), this devotional and prayer guide offers you a fantastic opportunity not only to gain some rich insights into what Cornerstone is all about, but also spaces to discern how God might be calling you to new and deeper levels of engagement in the life and mission of this church.

For those of you who have been with Cornerstone a longer time – whether three years or five or ten or twenty – this guide will reinforce your sense of what we're about as a church, and hopefully stir your heart as to what God might be asking of you in the next leg of Cornerstone's journey.

This prayer guide also offers you an opportunity to personally draw nearer to Jesus during Lent.

As God draws us deeper into his heart, and deeper into partnering together in the shared mission he has for us as a church family, we will increasingly experience the same joy that Paul came to know through his gospel partnership with the Philippians:

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now...¹

¹ Philippians 1:3-5 (NIV)

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide offers a 7-day cycle of scripture readings, reflections and prayer spaces to be repeated throughout the Lenten season of 2024, which begins on Wednesday, February 14 and ends on Thursday, March 28.²

Simply follow the dates listed at the top of each devotional, and:

- Read the scripture selection and reflections
- Follow the prayer prompts, using them as a springboard for more extended times of prayer as the Lord leads.³

You will repeat each devotional 6-7 times over the course of the Lenten season. Such repetition is meant to reinforce what you're learning as well as to deepen your sense of what God is saying to you and how he's working in your life. We encourage you to **keep a journal** to track what you're learning and how God is speaking to you as you engage with this guide during Lent.

May our shared experience of praying through this guide be a *journey into joy* that:

- Draws us closer to Jesus
- Draws us closer to each other in him
- Stirs within us the dreams God has for Cornerstone as a local church
- Prepares us to discern together the future direction God has in mind for Cornerstone

² In Christian tradition, Sundays are not counted as part of the 40-day period of Lent in honour of the fact that Jesus' resurrection took place on a Sunday. However, this devotional and prayer guide includes Sundays.

³ This guide includes prompts for a variety of prayer forms, such as silence, scripture-based prayers, various written prayers, listening prayer, and spaces to pray in your own words as the Holy Spirit leads you.

WEDNESDAY – February 14, 21, 28 // March 6, 13, 20, 27

Prayer

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-centre my scattered senses upon the *presence* of God.⁴

– Pause to come present to God in silence

Scripture

Read the following passages twice, slowly (aloud if possible). As you do, take note of any words or phrases that especially stand out to you, or any stirrings within your heart.

I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return.

– **Philippians 1:9-11 (NLT)**

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. – **Philippians 4:8-9 (NIV)**

Do you sense any personal invitation from God as you engage these sacred texts? If so, make note of it in a journal or in the margins of this booklet.

Cornerstone Distinctive – THINKING THEOLOGICALLY

Thinking theologically can be defined as the reflective and prayerful process through which we discern how to live our daily lives, do ministry and mission, and engage the culture around us *in a way that is faithful to scripture, and therefore faithful to Jesus himself*.⁵

That may sound like a mouthful, but really, every Christian is a theologian. That is to say, every Christian knows, thinks and speaks about God. That's what the word theology means. In Greek, it's a word (*logos*) about God (*theos*).

Theology is often seen as boring and dry, far removed from the practical concerns of daily life and ministry. But far from being irrelevant, the way we think and speak about God has tremendous implications for the church and its mission, not to mention our daily lives. Paul is well aware of this when he encourages the Philippian Christians to *keep on growing in knowledge and understanding* and to *understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return*.

⁴ A morning prayer from Lectio 365.

⁵ Want to learn more about how you can grow in thinking theologically? Check out our *Learning to Think Theologically Guide Sheet* at www.cornerstonechurch.ca/thinkingtheologically.

In his classic book *The Knowledge of the Holy*, renowned pastor and author A.W. Tozer once wrote that, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

Indeed, if what we think about God is inconsistent with who God reveals himself to be in scripture and in Jesus, our very relationship with God will be compromised because we won't be relating to God for who he really is. If what we believe about God's purposes for us and for the world is inconsistent with what Bible reveals them to be in Christ, we'll end up living and ministering in ways that are out of alignment with God's actual intentions. Theology matters!

It's not a question of whether or not we do theology. Theology is inevitable. Rather, it's a question of whether or not we do *good, scriptural, Jesus-centred theology*.

As you read about other Cornerstone distinctives in the days ahead, keep in mind that thinking theologically is arguably our most important distinctive, because it's been the gateway leading to all of our other distinctives. It was through theological reflection that God led us to become an intercultural church of *Unity-in-Diversity*, for example. It also prepared us to receive God's leading to build a community centre style church facility, which has enabled us to more fully live out his calling to be a *God-in-the-Neighbourhood* kind of congregation. These are just two of many examples.

Without question, theological thinking must remain a vital practice for discerning the future God has for us as a church, as we continue to engage the greater community and the wider culture in a way that is faithful to scripture, and therefore faithful to Jesus himself.

Prayer

Father, today I'm reminded that what comes into my mind when I think about you is the most important thing about me. Help me to keep my eyes fixed on you, Lord Jesus, because God's nature is fully revealed in you.⁶ Indeed, there is none more *true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent* and *praiseworthy* than you. Thank you for the ways that thinking theologically has shaped Cornerstone over the years, and has been a key channel through which you've shaped us into the unique church that we are. I thank you for Cornerstone, and allowing me to be a part of what you're doing in this church. Even as I ask that you would bless, keep and protect Cornerstone in every way, I also pray that you will reveal to me how you want me to further engage in what you're doing in and through this church.

In your name I pray, Lord Jesus. Amen.

– Continue in prayer as the Spirit leads

⁶ See Hebrews 12:2; John 14:9; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:3

THURSDAY – February 15, 22, 29 // March 7, 14, 21, 28

Prayer

Lord God, almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought me in safety to this new day: Preserve me with your mighty power, that I may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all I do, direct me to the fulfilling of your purpose, through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.⁷

– Pause to come present to God in silence

Scripture

Read the following scripture selections twice, slowly (aloud if possible). As you do, take note of any words or phrases that especially stand out to you, or any stirrings within your heart.

Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now ... Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News ...

We are in this struggle together. – **Philippians 1:4-5, 27, 30 (NLT)**

Do you sense any personal invitation from God as you engage these sacred texts? If so, make note of it in a journal or in the margins of this booklet.

Cornerstone Distinctive – UNITY-IN-DIVERSITY

In Philippians, two closely-related themes about the advance of the gospel are *partnership (or fellowship)* and *the unity of believers*.⁸

The idea of partnership stresses how we as Christ-followers share in common all of the material and spiritual resources necessary to carry out the mission that God has entrusted to us as a church family.⁹ As believers, we are united together in the Holy Spirit, and called to live in harmony with one another.

When we share the good news of Jesus and participate in doing good in his name, we are likely to encounter enemy opposition, and as a result we will face various trials and tests. Paul makes it clear that *standing together with one spirit and one purpose* is crucial to win any fight against the forces of darkness, whose strategy is often to divide and conquer.

Unity is the relational glue that binds us together in God's self-giving, others-focused love. This love was perfectly manifested in Jesus – a love that never oppresses, never coerces, but always liberates. Such love is the greenhouse that nourishes character and community

⁷ A morning prayer from *The Divine Hours: A Manual for Prayer* by Phyllis Tickle.

⁸ For *partnership or fellowship*, see Philippians 1:5, 7; 2:1; 3:10; 4:14-15. For *unity*, see 1:17, 30; 2:2; 4:3.

⁹ See also Acts 2-4; 1 Corinthians 12-14; 1 Peter 4:10-11.

growth. We are spiritually redeemed as *citizens of heaven* to reflect and model the loving unity and cooperation of the Father, Son and Spirit.

When we show compassion, generosity, humility and forgiveness toward one another – regardless of our ethnic, cultural, social, gender, political and personal distinctions – we will bear the fruit of the Spirit who binds us together in Christ. Such unity is an identity marker for God’s people, and it draws unbelievers to Jesus.¹⁰

Conversely, if there is disunity, divisiveness, and squabbling among God’s people, the fragrance of Christ is turned into the odour of death, and Satan gets a foothold in the church, thus derailing its mission. Jesus doesn’t mince words when he says:

A kingdom divided by civil war will collapse. Similarly, a family splintered by feuding will fall apart.¹¹

Therefore, as Paul goes on to say, we must *fight together for the faith* and not be intimidated by our enemies.

As an intentionally intercultural church situated in the remarkably diverse area of Markham-Stouffville, unity-in-diversity becomes all the more vital for a church like Cornerstone. It serves as a sign of our spiritual maturity as we participate in God’s world-restoring mission in a spirit of Christlike, self-giving love.¹² The progress and effectiveness of our ministry depends on it.

Listening Prayer: Questions for God

Ask God the following questions about your role when it comes to partnership and unity at Cornerstone. As you ask these questions, how is God speaking to you? Is there a particular question that feels especially relevant for you at this stage of your journey? Take some time to talk to God about these things. If you wish, write your prayers in a journal.

- God, do I have any grievances or grudges against anyone that I need to let go of? Is there anyone I need to forgive?
- God, do I need to ask for someone’s forgiveness?
- God, are you calling me to connect more often and/or deeply with others in this church?
- God, are you asking to me participate more actively or sacrificially in Cornerstone’s mission?
- God, are you prompting me to show self-giving love to someone in the church in a particular way?

¹⁰ See John 17:21

¹¹ Mark 3:24-25 (NLT)

¹² See Ephesians 4:1-6

FRIDAY – February 16, 23 // March 1, 8, 15, 22

Prayer

Lord Jesus, I follow you today in the way of humility. Help me to give more than I get, to serve without requiring thanks, and to listen more than I speak, eliciting joy in those I meet. Amen.¹³

– Pause to come present to God in silence

Scripture

Read the following scripture selections twice, slowly (aloud if possible). As you do, take note of any words or phrases that especially stand out to you, or any stirrings within your heart.

Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. – **Philippians 1:27 (NLT)**

... he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. – **Philippians 2:7-8 (NLT)**

But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. – **Philippians 3:20 (NLT)**

Do you sense any personal invitation from God as you engage these sacred texts? If so, make note of it in a journal or in the margins of this booklet.

Cornerstone Distinctive – GOD-IN-THE-NEIGHBOURHOOD

Paul shared the gospel with some women in Philippi. One of them, Lydia, became a follower of Jesus and invited Paul and Silas to stay at her home where the first Philippian believers (*the citizens of heaven*) met for regular gatherings.¹⁴

Philippi was a proud colony of Rome, and a large number of Roman citizens had settled there. Roman citizens had absolute rights and privileges. In such a context, Paul called the Philippian Christians to live as good citizens of heaven, committed to following the way and example of Jesus as they lived on earth.

Therefore, to be *citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives* is far from being “so heavenly minded that we are of no earthly good.” On the contrary, we are to be salt and light in the cities, towns and communities in which we live.¹⁵ After the pattern of Jesus’ own life, we are to be characterized by self-giving love, enriching the lives of our neighbours by doing good. In fact, a local church like Cornerstone is meant to be an outpost or embassy of heaven on earth, which offers the world a foretaste of what the restored world is going to be like

¹³ *Humility Prayer* from Lectio 365.

¹⁴ See Acts 16:13-15, 40

¹⁵ See Matthew 5:13-16. See also Jeremiah 29:7.

when Jesus ultimately does return as our *Saviour*.

Although Jesus was God, he did not cling to his divine privileges, but instead was born as a human being. A well-known paraphrase of John's gospel expresses it this way:

The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.¹⁶

The theological term for this is the *incarnation*. God the Father sent God the Son into the world as an embodied human being to fulfill his mission in a particular geographical context. The incarnation, in turn, shows how to we are live out our faith in our own local setting. This is what Jesus means when he says to his disciples:

“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”¹⁷

As a local church in the Markham-Stouffville area, we go into our neighbourhoods and serve as a bridge to connect with the unchurched and make the invisible God visible. Cornerstone does this through any number of community partnerships and outreach initiatives. As well, Cornerstone Centre was designed as a community centre style facility to be our gift to the greater community in Jesus' name. It's a place where we host our neighbours for life-affirming community programs for all ages, including Open Table Thursday dinners, camps, a wide variety of recreation programs, and large-scale community events.

By blessing and building relationships with our neighbours in this way, we live out the distinctive of being a *God-in-the-Neighbourhood* church. As a result, many of our non-Christian neighbours have become disciples of Jesus over the years, and are now active participants in Cornerstone's mission. How is God calling you to be a part of this going forward?

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross so that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace. So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you, for the honour of you name. Amen.¹⁸

– Continue in prayer as the Spirit leads

¹⁶ John 1:14 (MSG)

¹⁷ John 20:21 (NLT)

¹⁸ Adapted from *The Book of Common Prayer*

SATURDAY – February 17, 24 // March 2, 9, 16, 23

Prayer

Spirit of God, with your help and by your grace:

I open my heart to be the hospitality of Christ, to all those who come to my door.
I open my heart to embrace the stranger, the friend, the rich, the poor.
I open my life to offer a generous heart toward all.¹⁹

– Pause to come present to God in silence

Scripture

Read the following scripture selections twice, slowly (aloud if possible). As you do, take note of any words or phrases that especially stand out to you, or any stirrings within your heart.

If the Lord Jesus is willing, I hope to send Timothy to you soon for a visit. Then he can cheer me up by telling me how you are getting along. – **Philippians 2:19 (NLT)**

Meanwhile, I thought I should send Epaphroditus back to you... Welcome him in the Lord's love and with great joy, and give him the honor that people like him deserve.
– **Philippians 2:25a, 29 (NLT)**

On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us. – **Acts 16:13-15 (NLT)**

Do you sense any personal invitation from God as you engage these sacred texts? If so, make note of it in a journal or in the margins of this booklet.

Cornerstone Distinctive – BIBLICAL HOSPITALITY

Admittedly, the scripture readings above are not the kind of passages you would typically find in a devotional and prayer guide. But each passage points to a vital biblical practice that was woven right into the ancient culture of the land of the Bible. That practice is *hospitality*.

In the first of today's scripture passages, we see Paul encouraging the Philippians to be prepared to show hospitality to his ministry partner Timothy when he comes to visit them. In the second, he encourages them to welcome one of their own, Epaphroditus, who would soon be returning from the long journey they had sent him on to visit Paul in prison. The

¹⁹ A Celtic Hospitality Liturgy

third passage speaks of Lydia, who Paul led to faith in Jesus. She persuaded Paul and his companions to accept her hospitality, and would eventually open the doors of her home to host the gatherings of the new church that Paul would plant in Philippi.

In the Bible, hospitality has to do specifically with *welcoming the stranger* – someone who is either unknown or at least not well-known to you – especially those who come from different backgrounds from your own.²⁰

Biblical hospitality is one of Cornerstone’s core values, and by God’s grace over the years, we’ve developed a reputation as a welcoming church. Our heart is to welcome newcomers and guests with the hospitality of Jesus himself. A welcoming culture is a beautiful thing, and makes a great impact for God’s kingdom, but it’s only sustainable when everyone in the congregation sees themselves as a host. Yes, hospitality is the job of church staff and designated welcome teams, but it’s also the job of everyone who calls Cornerstone their home church. You’re a host!

Every Sunday you’re at church, challenge yourself to welcome at least one person who’s new. If you’re not sure who’s new, then simply introduce yourself to at least one person you do not yet know. Don’t just huddle with those you already know and are comfortable with. Reach out and make a connection with someone from a different background. Level up and invite someone you don’t yet know very well out for coffee or lunch, to your home for a meal, or perhaps to your small group. How is God calling you to be a part of strengthening Cornerstone’s welcoming culture?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you have said, “I was a stranger and you invited me in.”²¹ In welcoming the stranger, I somehow open myself up to experience more of you, and perhaps those that I welcome will experience more of you as well.²² Lord, grant me the courage to welcome others as you have welcomed me.²³ As I do, I pray that by your Spirit you will quietly get into the middle of all the hospitality exchanges I’m involved in, and do what only you can do. Amen.

– Continue in prayer as the Spirit leads

20 While Epaphroditus wasn’t a stranger to the Philippians, the kind of welcome Paul encouraged them to have toward this brother would certainly qualify as a “close cousin” of the practice of hospitality.

21 Matthew 25:35 (NIV)

22 See also Hebrews 13:2

23 See Romans 15:7

SUNDAY – February 18, 25 // March 3, 10, 17, 24

Prayer

I rejoiced with those who said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD.”²⁴

– Pause to come present to God in silence

Scripture

Read the following scripture selections twice, slowly (aloud if possible). As you do, take note of any words or phrases that especially stand out to you, or any stirrings within your heart.

... he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. – **Philippians 1:6 (NIV)**

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

– **Philippians 2:5-11 (NIV)**

I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. – **Philippians 3:10-14 (NIV)**

Do you sense any personal invitation from God as you engage these sacred texts? If so, make note of it in a journal or in the margins of this booklet.

²⁴ Psalm 122:1 (NIV)

Cornerstone Distinctive – DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY

Cornerstone's Mission Statement is: *Making space for Jesus to shape people together in God's love.* This is basically a way of saying that Cornerstone exists to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Disciples are those who follow Jesus as Master, and in the process, become more like him – and Jesus is the ultimate expression of God's love. This theme is abundantly evident in Philippians. We can be confident that God, *who began a good work in us, will carry it on to completion*, and that work includes shaping us to reflect the self-giving love of Jesus in thought, word and deed.

In fact, Jesus' life, death and resurrection becomes the pattern or template for our discipleship, as Paul describes above in Philippians 2:5-11 and 3:10-14. If we want to become like Jesus and experience his resurrection power, we must heed his invitation to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him.²⁵

Especially during Lent, we remember Jesus' journey to his cross and resurrection, and we are reminded that we are called to follow in his footsteps. As we do, his Spirit shapes us in Christlike, self-sacrificial love for the sake of others, and for the sake of God's ongoing mission to restore the world in Jesus.

Did you know Cornerstone has a Jesus-centred 5-part discipleship framework called *The Discipleship Pathway*?²⁶ We encourage you to visit our website and explore the Discipleship Pathway pages, take our custom online discipleship assessment, peruse related resources and opportunities, and take your next step on the Discipleship Pathway.²⁷

Prayer

O Lord Jesus, use the circumstances and interactions of this day to form us more fully into your likeness. From the frustrations of this day form peace. From the joys of this day form strength. From the struggles of this day form courage. From the beauties of this day form love. In the name of Jesus Christ who is all peace and strength and courage and love. Amen.²⁸

– Continue in prayer as the Spirit leads

²⁵ See Matthew 16:24-26; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23

²⁶ The 5 parts of the Discipleship Pathway are ESTABLISH Identity in Jesus, EMBODY the Jesus Way of Life, EXPLORE Jesus' Call to Life Mission, EXTEND Jesus' Love in Life Mission and EXPERIENCE Jesus' Care and Healing.

²⁷ For more on Cornerstone's Discipleship Pathway, including a custom online discipleship assessment, visit www.cornerstonechurch.ca/discipleshippathway.

²⁸ Adapted from Richard Foster's "A Formation Prayer" in his *Prayers From the Heart*, p. 32.

MONDAY – February 19, 26 // March 4, 11, 18, 25

Prayer

I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.²⁹

– Pause to come present to God in silence

Scripture

Read the following scripture selections twice, slowly (aloud if possible). As you do, take note of any words or phrases that especially stand out to you, or any stirrings within your heart.

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. – **Philippians 2:19-22 (NIV)**

Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus. You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others. – **2 Timothy 2:1-2 (NLT)**

Do you sense any personal invitation from God as you engage these sacred texts? If so, make note of it in a journal or in the margins of this booklet.

Cornerstone Distinctive – LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

In the footsteps of Jesus, who developed many of his disciples into leaders, the passages above point to how Paul developed his young protégé, Timothy, into a fellow leader and highly valued partner in ministry.

In the first passage, the imprisoned Paul is about to send Timothy to encourage and support the church in Philippi. Timothy's capacity to pastor his own congregation in Ephesus (see 1 and 2 Timothy) and also to support other churches like the one in Philippi was the fruit of Paul's investment in him as a developing leader over the years.

In the second passage, Paul is writing directly to Timothy, encouraging him to develop other leaders as Paul has developed him, adding that these new leaders should also become developers of other leaders: Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.

In the same spirit, Cornerstone aspires to cultivate a culture of leadership development. It is hard to understate the importance of this priority, because leadership is always a temporary

²⁹ Psalm 130:5-6 (NIV)

assignment. Even those who lead in the same role for a long time will not do so forever, and this should create in our current leaders an urgency to develop and equip others for ministry, so that they may continue to carry the torch of Christ after us. The church's future depends on the development and multiplication of leaders.

Furthermore, as a fast-growing church, Cornerstone needs more leaders both as it grows, and also to be able to keep on growing. In the early chapters of Acts, we read about the exponential growth of the early church, and the challenges that came with such growth. Their development of new leaders is what helped solve those challenges, with the following results: *So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly...*³⁰

That said, it's essential to recognize that the Jesus Way of leadership is counter-cultural. It's not about influence through power and control, as is often popularly believed and practiced, but rather through humble service for the sake of others. This is what Paul has in mind when he affirms Timothy for how he shows genuine concern for the Philippians welfare, not looking out for his own interests, but rather for those of Jesus Christ. The Jesus Way of leadership is servant leadership, as we see in Jesus' ultimate example of laying down his life for our sake.³¹ Lent is a season that especially brings his sacrificial example into focus. As Tim Keller writes:

If at the very heart of your worldview is a man dying for his enemies, then the way you're going to influence the world is through service rather than through power and control.³²

Listening Prayer: Questions for God

Ask God the following questions about what he has in mind for you when it comes to leadership development. How is God speaking to you? Is there a particular question that feels especially relevant for you at this stage of your journey? Take some time to talk to God about these things. If you wish, write your prayers in a journal.

- Lord, are you calling me to be developed as a leader at Cornerstone or in some other setting?
- Lord, is there a next step you would have me take? Is there a role you would have me step up to?
- Lord, how are you speaking to me about influencing others through loving, humble service rather than through power and control?
- Lord, how are you calling and challenging me to become a developer of other leaders?

30 Acts 6:7 (NIV)

31 See again Philippians 2:5-11; cf. Luke 22:24-27.

32 Timothy Keller, *King's Cross*, 149.

TUESDAY – February 20, 27 // March 5, 12, 19, 26

Prayer

May the words of my mouth and the mediation of my heart be acceptable to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.”³³

– Pause to come present to God in silence

Scripture

Read the following scripture passage twice, slowly (aloud if possible). As you do, take note of any words or phrases that especially stand out to you, or any stirrings within your heart.

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,
To all God’s holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers
and deacons:
Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you,
I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day
until now...

– **Philippians 1:1-5 (NIV)**

Do you sense any personal invitation from God as you engage these sacred texts? If so, make note of it in a journal or in the margins of this booklet.

Cornerstone Distinctive – TEAM LEADERSHIP

Yesterday, we looked at the importance of leadership development. The passage above actually contains rich nuggets of insight about biblical leadership that are all too easily overlooked.

It begins with the mention of the leadership tandem of Paul and Timothy. We often think of Philippians as a letter written by Paul— and mainly it is. But what we often miss is that it was sent to the Philippian church from both Paul *and* Timothy.

Look more closely and you will also notice that the letter addressed to the Philippian church as a whole *together with the overseers and deacons*, or as the New Living Translation translates it, *including the church leaders and deacons*.

These examples are indicative of a principle and practice that New Testament scholars call *plurality of leadership*. Throughout the New Testament, we see that church leadership was always a team effort. Jesus himself wasn’t a solo leader, but empowered his team of twelve to lead with him, and after him. And wherever Paul established a new church, he always chose a team of gifted leaders to oversee it.³⁴

³³ Psalm 19:14 (NLT)

³⁴ See Acts 13:1-3; 14:23; Titus 1:5

At Cornerstone, we believe deeply in team leadership as the biblical way – the *Jesus Way* – of doing church leadership. For example, rather than having a single CEO-type leader who oversees the entire church, we have a senior staff team called the Executive Team made up of three co-equal members. This team works collaboratively with each other, and also with our Executive Church Board and our Ministry Staff Team to discern and set the ministry direction and objectives for the church, as well as to carry out the church’s ministry through the wider congregation. In fact, most of Cornerstone’s ministries use a team leadership approach.

Such shared leadership makes space for collective wisdom, the leveraging of a more robust variety of spiritual gifts and strengths, and better overall accountability. To coin a phrase, when it comes to the leadership of the church “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”

We believe team leadership best reflects God’s nature, because God himself exists in a “team” of three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and he created us to reflect his image.³⁵ As well, we believe that because we are fallen individuals, we are inadequate to lead God’s people alone. At the end of the day, Jesus is the only true leader of his church.³⁶

Despite the many benefits of team leadership, it may at times feel slow and inefficient; it also has the potential for tension and misunderstanding. How can we do team leadership well? By practicing humility and placing the needs of others above our own. We do this by:

- Knowing that we’re not here to be served but to serve, like Jesus did.³⁷
- Celebrating the accomplishments of others.
- Recognizing that everyone is important but no one is more important than the mission.

Prayer

Use the following prayer to pray for Cornerstone’s leadership teams—the Executive Team, the Executive Church Board, the Ministry and Operations Staff teams, and all of the different leadership teams throughout the church’s ministries. Thank you for your prayers—we need them!

Heavenly Father, I pray for all of Cornerstone’s leaders. Thank you for each one. Renew them in you, Lord. Deepen their prayer lives. Keep them strong in Jesus. I pray for their well-being in every way—spiritually, emotionally, relationally and physically. Fill each one afresh with your Spirit. Deliver them from the evil one. Guard their hearts and minds. Protect their marriages and families. Give them wisdom, integrity and unity that they may lead your people well. Make them abundantly fruitful as they abide in Jesus. And help me not to forget to keep them covered in prayer. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

– Continue in prayer as the Spirit leads

³⁵ See Genesis 1:1-3 (Father and Spirit in creation); 26-28 (NLT - let us make human beings in our image); Colossians 1:15-17 (the Son in creation; cf. John 1:3)

³⁶ See 1 Peter 5:7

³⁷ See Philippians 2:1-4



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