

— THE —

G O S P E L

Lifestyle

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

What is the Gospel Lifestyle?

6 WORDS & ACTIONS

We are compelled by the words and actions of Jesus in all we do.

14 WHAT DOES LOVE REQUIRE?

We ask, "What does love require?" in every situation.

21 COMMUNITY

We live life in community with each other.

27 ON MISSION

We live life on mission with each other to restore all things.

37 SHARING ADVANTAGES

We seek to share any advantages we have with those who are less advantaged.

45 INCLUSION + HOSPITALITY

We include everyone, especially those not like us.

53 CONCLUSION

What's next?



— THE —
G O S P E L
Lifestyle
— Introduction —

You're here! We are SO glad that you are joining us for the Gospel Lifestyle; the start of a journey!

At Cornerstone Fellowship, we are 100% passionate about believing in Jesus and 100% passionate about following Him. And yes, you read that correctly: **believing** and **following** are NOT the same things. It is possible, and very common, to believe in Jesus but not regularly follow Him. However, in following Jesus, our belief in Him grows to depths that lead us to a life resembling the beauty of Christ Himself, a life SO compelling and attractive to the world around us that we begin to see heaven come to earth in powerful ways. Not only do we believe in Jesus, we believe in YOU!

You matter.

Your story matters.

Your faith journey matters.

Your relationship with Jesus matters!

Each person has a unique story, and we know from Jesus' example we are meant to live life together. In this together mindset, we can discover Jesus and the lifestyle that He is calling us to live.

Over the course of this discussion, our prayer is that you enter into a time of reflection, discovery, discipleship, encouragement, and growth. Regardless of where you find yourself on your faith journey, we are WITH you and FOR you as a church. We want to support you as best we can! For some of you, we hope that you discover Jesus for the first time! For others, especially those of you who grew up going to church, we hope this opens the door where the Gospel of Jesus comes alive for you again, perhaps in a way like never before! Or maybe, you may wrestle with what the Gospel Lifestyle requires and decide it's not for you, at least not right now. We are here for you too.

So...What is the Gospel Lifestyle?



The word Gospel literally means "good news." So the Gospel IS the good news of Jesus. The good news of Jesus starts with Him coming to earth to show us how to live. It culminates in His death on a cross and His resurrection ensuring eternal life for everyone who follows Him. But the Gospel is so much more. The good news of Jesus is about ALL of who Jesus is: His love, His peace, His sacrifice, His justice, and His grace. Everything about Jesus, including His plans to use us to bring heaven's values to earth, is GOOD news!

Jesus was clear that this good news is not just something we need to PREACH. This good news is also, and equally important, something we LIVE. The good news is a LIFESTYLE: A Gospel Lifestyle. It governs every aspect of how we choose to live life as we follow Jesus. When Jesus first called His disciples, He said, "*Come, follow me.*" That same invitation has been extended to ALL of us.

As we enter this time of discussion, we ask that you start with a humility that allows for your

heart and your hands to be open to who Jesus is and what it means to follow Him. Ideally, we would love for you to process this material with a group of people who bring varying perspectives, history, and life examples to the table that are different from yours. Humility and grace are NECESSARY within the conversations ahead to ensure that the LOVE OF CHRIST bonds your group together. The hope and prayer for EVERY group having these discussions, are that each group has participants looking to faithfully pursue the life Jesus has for us.

Okay, let's get into HOW the discussion time will work and HOW this discovery guide is designed.

As we go through this journey together, we will unpack six values that encapsulate how followers of Jesus are called to live out the Gospel Lifestyle that Jesus has called us to. Check these out:

Value 1: We are compelled by the **words and actions** of Jesus in all we do.

Value 2: We ask, “**What does love require?**” in every situation.

Value 3: We live life in **community** with each other.

Value 4: We live life on **mission** with each other to restore all things.

Value 5: We seek to **share any advantages** we have with those who are less advantaged.

Value 6: We **include** everyone, especially those not like us.

What will that look like? Let's say your group decides to unpack one value every week for the next few weeks. Every week, before you meet with your group, you'll begin with a time of personal reflection and reading over the material provided in this discovery guide.

Have you ever planned a vacation? Big or small, PREPARATION is essential. Before you arrive at your destination, you took time thinking where you wanted to go, thought through what went into your suitcase, and took the time to decide which airline or which route you planned to take to arrive at your destination. When it comes to the group discussion times, consider the personal reflection and reading time as YOUR time to prepare. It's necessary.

So you'll start with a time of personal reflection, jotting down answers to a few questions that help you identify your current position or even past experiences that make up who you are TODAY. You'll then read through the material on your own. Don't forget to highlight, investigate, and identify what stands out to you in the material.

At that point, it's time to connect with your awesome group! Since everyone has read the material, you'll jump right into the provided group discussion questions. OR, if you have questions of your own, bring them up during your group time! By using this designated time as a time of discovery, discipleship, wrestling, encouragement, and growth, the Gospel Lifestyle becomes more and more clear. We encourage you NOT to rush through this material! Use the group discussion note section to write down what stands out to you during your discussion time.

After your time together as a group concludes, it is important to reflect back on your notes,

thoughts, and feelings. Take time to unpack questions like: What is a new thought for you? What is something that has been confirmed to you about this lifestyle, about your relationship with Jesus? What do you disagree with? Why? What questions do you have?

We encourage you to take your time! Be intentional with this journey. We pray that this will be a transformative experience for you *individually*, your group *communally*, and our church *collectively* as we all learn how to live out Jesus' Gospel Lifestyle together.

Group Discussion

Below is a list of questions designed to help your group unpack, process, and apply the material you read and spent time personally reflecting on. Of course, you are welcome to answer a few or all of them and/or supplement your own questions.

- Describe your journey of following Jesus.
- What is the difference between believing in Jesus and following Jesus?

Notes: _____

[illegible]



**We are compelled
by the Words
and Actions
of Jesus in all
we do**

A good life? There is an unending amount of advice available to you on how to live a *good life*: YouTube videos, blogs, podcasts, books, Ted Talks, and on and on. So much of the content out there is solid and helpful! But, on the other hand, some of the content is... not. Okay, so then what? How do you sort through the overload of information to get clarity around what a *good life* is? Are we supposed to each make up a definition of what a *good life* is? Is there a primary source that has the authority to define a *good life*?

Yes, the answer is Jesus! At Cornerstone Fellowship, we believe that Jesus is our source, inspiration, and hope. He is the means to understand how we should live our lives.

The Bible is a beautiful, complicated, confusing, but powerful set of ancient preserved documents. We love the Bible because, through the power of the Holy Spirit, it reveals Jesus to us. As a result, we can know who Jesus is! We can understand what He is all about and what that means for our lives. Jesus is our ultimate authority, and the Bible is the greatest source of information on who Jesus is. Through faith and historical evidence, we believe that the stories of Jesus, as found in Scripture, are true.

For many people, the Bible can be intimidating. It is so complex and, for lack of a better word, ancient. For some believers, every printed word is to be read and interpreted both literally and strictly. For other believers, the Bible contains good advice that can be liberally applied or not applied as they see fit. Between those two extremes are the countless viewpoints on how to read and apply Scripture. Each approach creates, in essence, a different version of how to live the Gospel Lifestyle. In this first chapter, we hope to be unified in the priorities of the Gospel Lifestyle by how we read and apply Scripture.

At Cornerstone Fellowship, that unity is found when we read the entire Bible through the lens of Jesus' words and actions.

To sum it up, any approach to the Bible that intentionally or unintentionally minimizes the authority of Jesus' words and actions is not for us.

How Do We Read and Apply Scripture?

New Testament

Jesus' words and actions are found primarily in the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These books are the recommended starting point for reading the Bible and understanding who Jesus is and what He's all about.

The study of these four books is so important! While reading, it's almost like peeling back the onion on what Jesus' words and actions mean for how we are to live the Gospel Lifestyle. There is an unending amount of learning to be done in these books! As believers, it will take us our whole lives to continue processing, rethinking, and continually applying His truth to our lives.

The very first church began meeting in Jerusalem in the mid 30's AD. One of their most important habits is that '*they devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching...*' (Acts 2). It's common to read this and assume that the Apostles' teaching was the Apostles' letters, which we read in our Bibles today. However, most people do not realize that those letters were not written at that time in history! There was no New Testament in 30-33 AD when the early church was beginning to gather.

The reality is that the first church never studied the New Testament as a whole because the New Testament as we know it today did not even exist! The writings that we know collectively as the New Testament were written between 45-90 AD. It was around that time that the New Testament was beginning to be read as Scripture.

Since the first early churches didn't have a Bible as we know it, they instead devoted themselves to the Apostles' teachings. Those teachings were the eye-witness accounts of Jesus' life! They included first-hand knowledge of His words and actions. In turn, this brought an application to their lives and a new lens through which to view Hebrew scripture. The Apostles would tell stories of things that Jesus *actually* did and things he *actually* said. They devoted themselves to the accurate, first-hand eyewitness accounts of Jesus and its implications on their lives. Everything centered on Jesus. As a result, these eyewitness accounts documented by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the Gospels we have today.

After the four books documenting Jesus' words and actions, we arrive at the book of Acts, which is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke. The book of Acts provides us with eyewitness accounts and stories of how Jesus' disciples, empowered by the Holy Spirit, lived out the Gospel Lifestyle. This book is essential! Not only does it provide direction on how we are to live the Gospel Lifestyle, it includes plenty of direct application examples.

Next up within the New Testament are the letters that the Apostles wrote. Most are letters the Apostle Paul wrote to churches and people throughout the first-century church. The other New Testament books were written by Peter, Jude, John, James, and the unknown author of Hebrews. These books are a wonderful and helpful gift to us. They model for us how to apply the words and actions of Jesus to specific groups of people and cultures. There is so much flexibility in how the Gospel applies to different contexts. These books give us instructions on how to apply the Gospel in a variety of settings.

However, some of what was written in these books do not automatically apply the Gospel directly to us. For example, Paul's letter to the church in Rome is instruction on how to apply the words and actions of Jesus if you live in Rome in 57 AD. These books give specific instructions to people in cultures and contexts very different than ours and must be interpreted in such a way.

With that said, there is much in these books that contain universal truths about the Gospel. Like when Paul says:

But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. - Galatians 5:22-23 NIV

In this case, Paul clearly communicates the truth about the Gospel; an understanding that is true no matter what culture or time you live and will always be a core truth of the Gospel to all people. How do you know it is the core, eternal Gospel truth? We know because it aligns seamlessly with Jesus' words and actions in the four Gospel books.

However, there are other situations where Paul advises a particular group of churches in cultures that are very different from our own. For example, when Paul says:

Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. - 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 NIV

In reading this passage, we immediately notice that these verses run counter to Jesus' words and actions. He elevated the status of women, encouraging them to join the men when they gathered for teaching. Jesus even commissioned Mary Magdalene to be the 1st eyewitness and evangelist of the Resurrection. Jesus' empowerment of women in ministry is our guide.

Whenever we see a discrepancy like this in Scripture, where Paul is advising one thing, and Jesus is demonstrating the opposite, we need to research what is going on. This passage is one of the many situations where Paul is not trying to immediately change the brokenness of the culture in the ancient city of Corinth. Instead, he's offering advice to help the church adapt and live out the Gospel within that particular culture. That culture was dogmatic about women being subservient to men.

Paul is adapting the Gospel to the culture so that the Gospel can take hold and eventually bring about restoration in that culture.

Jesus' empowerment of women is our guide. In practice, even Paul affirms this empowerment of women. The instances where it appears he's doing the opposite offer significant context to explain why.

When engaging with the books in the New Testament, there is always work to do. It is critical to decipher the cultural context of any given statement and view it through what we know about the words and actions of Jesus. This deciphering is necessary before directly applying that Scripture to our lives today and is true, to various degrees, with all books in the Bible. However, when comparing the four Gospels to the New Testament epistles (letters of the Apostles), the epistles usually have more context-dependent content. This content requires us to do our homework before we rush to the application.

How can we decipher what verses are core, eternal Gospel truths vs. context-specific

instructions to a particular group that may not apply to us? Great question! It's not always easy to do. However, we can use the words and actions of Jesus as a lens to decipher. I.e., *How did Jesus act and talk? What does He value most? What does He instruct?* Anywhere we see those things reflected directly in other parts of Scripture, we can know that we've hit on core, eternal Gospel truth.

Anytime we see verses that seem to run counter to Jesus' words and actions, we get a clue. There may be context-specific stuff taking place that requires more work on our part to understand.

Old Testament

The story of Jesus as the redeemer and restorer of all things did not come from just anywhere. His role is the fulfillment of a long story of how God restores all things that began back in the book of Genesis! The Old Testament is where we learn of this history and understand the long winding path God chose to take to get to the fulfillment of the story in Jesus. As a result, we need to study the Old Testament as valuable information about God and the events that happened before Jesus came to live among us.

In addition, like the New Testament books, the Old Testament contains an abundance of eternal and universal truths about God. It is wise to study the attributes of God as described. It is amazing to read about the Old Testament saints who knew God before Jesus came to earth.

For example: *When David prays in Psalm 86:5, 'You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you.' This eternal truth about God is independent of context or culture.*

When it comes to studying the Old Testament, we must understand the differences between the Old Covenant (which the majority of the Old Testament was written under) and the New Covenant that Jesus brought. The Old Covenant was a conditional agreement between God and the nation of Israel. This temporary covenant came to an end when Jesus fulfilled it. In today's context, we are not part of the Old Covenant; it does not apply to us. The premise of the Old Covenant was God's promise to bless the nation of Israel. They were to be a model for righteousness and justice to the rest of the world as long as the nation of Israel obeyed God's commandments. If they did not obey the commandments, then God would punish them. God had a completely different strategy for how He interacted with humanity to bring about restoration. That interaction was primarily focused on working through a particular nation.

However, it is important to always read the Old Testament through the lens of Jesus. The reason this is so vital is because of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. The Old Testament is not always meant to provide direct application to our lives today, especially the Old Covenant found in Exodus through Deuteronomy. We always read the Old Testament through the lens of Jesus and the New Covenant. With this understanding, it's great to go through the Old Testament and find all the ways that Jesus is foreshadowed.

God's covenant with Israel was very different from the New Covenant. The New Covenant Jesus brought is unconditional and forever. Jesus loves everyone, and He died for us so that we could have a life independent of our obedience. Romans 5:8, *'While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.'* The New Covenant is also available to every human on earth for all time, regardless of nation or ethnicity. This forever covenant is guaranteed to be effective in redeeming and restoring the entire world.

But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. - Hebrews 8:6-7 NIV

It is essential to have this understanding to get the most fruitful value out of the Old Testament. For example: In Leviticus 20:10, when God says, *'When a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death,'* we do not take this as direction for us today.

Instead, we defer to Jesus' direction. Like when the woman caught in adultery was brought before Jesus, and Jesus says, *'You who are without sin can throw the first stone.'* Jesus re-wrote the rules, which He can do because He is God. Whenever an Old Testament passage seems to conflict with what Jesus said or did, we obey Jesus as our ultimate authority.

Jesus is the true Word of God, and the Bible fully supports this. For example, in Hebrews 4 it says:

"Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow: it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before Him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one whom we must render an account." - Hebrews 4:12-13 NSRV

As Jesus said in John 5:39: *You searched the scripture thinking they would give you eternal life. But the scriptures point to me!*

Our main point is this: Jesus is the lens and the key we use to study and understand the Bible in the way it was intended to be understood. It unlocks Scripture's full value and protects us from using the Bible in ways it was never intended to be used.

Holy Spirit

But what about the Holy Spirit? Doesn't the Holy Spirit speak to and guide us in how to live the Gospel Lifestyle? Yes! 100%. The Holy Spirit is given to us by Christ to be our Helper (John 14:16) and to live a life compelled by the words and actions of Jesus. We cannot live the Gospel Lifestyle in our own strength. It is simply too difficult! The Gospel runs counter to our sinful nature and many cultural influences. This Lifestyle requires us to be constantly depending on the Holy Spirit to empower us to follow Jesus.

With that said the Holy Spirit never contradicts Jesus' words and actions. We obey the words and actions of Jesus in all that we are trying to do! The Holy Spirit is our Helper so that we have a chance of being obedient and faithful. Anything that is at odds with what Jesus said or did is not of the Holy Spirit. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to help us understand when there is confusion or gray areas. We need the Holy Spirit to empower us to endure when there is a trial, give us strength when we feel weak, and help us in many other ways.

Jesus' words and actions recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are our ultimate authority on the Gospel Lifestyle. Furthermore, it is the model given by the Apostles in the New Testament that directly impacts our preaching and teaching strategy at Cornerstone Fellowship.

Cornerstone Fellowship's Preaching/Teaching Strategy

There are two primary things we see the Apostles include in their teaching that we want to model:

- 1. Clearly explain the wholeness of the Gospel to our church based on the words and actions of Jesus (supported by the rest of Scripture and illuminated for us by the Holy Spirit).**
- 2. Apply the wholeness of the Gospel to actual events happening in our church, our communities around us, our country, and our world.**

This teaching style is most consistent with what the Apostles modeled. Now, we recognize that some people have a hard time with this, particularly #2. Some might say the Church should avoid applying the Gospel to current events because it hits a little too close to home. Sometimes the Gospel may contradict another worldview that we hold dear. However, this is what Gospel-centered preaching is supposed to do!

The Apostles did this so well, which is why we strive to emulate their teaching. The Gospel challenges everyone to lay down anything that holds them back from fully following Christ, even in our day and our cultural setting.

So, at the end of the day, what is a *good life*? A *good life* is and will always be defined by Jesus. As followers of Jesus, we are compelled by His words and actions. How we read and apply Scripture while depending on the Holy Spirit to guide us forward is all part of living the Gospel Lifestyle, a *good life*.

Group Discussion

Below is a list of questions designed to help your group unpack, process, and apply the material you read and spent time personally reflecting on. Of course, you are welcome to answer a few or all of them and/or supplement your own questions.

- How were you taught, in the past, to read and apply Scripture?
- When you think about reading and applying Scripture through the “lens of Jesus’ words and actions,” how does that help you draw more value out of the whole of Scripture?

Notes: _____



We ask
“What does love
require?” in
every situation

In the last chapter, we mentioned the differences between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant as they relate to understanding how to read and apply Scripture.

Now, let's take a deeper look at the Old Covenant and highlight the three primary attributes, especially as it contrasts with the New Covenant.

First, the Old Covenant was **exclusive**. Let's go to the Book of Exodus to learn more:

Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession'..."The people all responded together, "We will do everything the Lord has said." - Exodus 19:3-5, 8 NIV

Did you notice how God intentionally designed the Old Covenant as an agreement between God *and* the nation of Israel? It was an exclusive covenant. This covenant is not an agreement between God *and* you or God *and* me in today's setting. We are not included in this agreement.

Second, the Old Covenant was **temporary**. It began roughly 3,500 years ago when God called Moses up to the top of Mt. Sinai to forge a contractual agreement. It came to an end around 2,000 years ago when Jesus fulfilled it.

Over and over, Jesus talked about His purpose of fulfilling the Old Covenant in order to make way for the New. What does it mean to fulfill? Think about when you order some stuff from Amazon. Once your payment is processed and the products arrive on your porch, Amazon then considers the order fulfilled. It has been completed. There are no longer any contractual obligations for you or for Amazon to deliver on. The order has been fulfilled.

The unknown author of Hebrews uses the word **obsolete** to describe the temporary nature of the Old Covenant:

By calling the covenant 'new,' he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear. - Hebrews 8:13 NIV

This doesn't mean the Old Testament, or more accurately, the Hebrew Scriptures, do not have value to us. As we noted in the last session, they have tremendous value as long as we interpret them in the intended way, and understand that the Old Covenant has come to an end. It was a temporary agreement between God and the nation of Israel that has been fulfilled by Jesus.

Third, the Old Covenant was a **rules-based** agreement. God gave Moses the Ten Commandments but He didn't stop there. There are hundreds of rules associated with the Old Covenant as laid out in the Old Testament. The premise of the covenant was that Israel was to obey those rules. If they did that fairly well, God would bless them, and if they didn't, God would punish them. We see that cycle go round and round in the Old Testament stories. Now, it's important to point out that there was nothing wrong with the Old Covenant that God set up

with Israel. It was God's preferred strategy at that time in preparation for Jesus.

The New Covenant that Jesus brought is different from the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant was exclusive (specifically for the people of Israel), but the New Covenant was inclusive; it is for all people for all time. The Old Covenant was temporary, but the New Covenant is eternal; there will be no more covenants. It is the final covenant for all people.

A Deeper Look at the New Covenant

Finally, we'll focus on how the New Covenant differs from the Old Covenant in that it's not a rules-based covenant. As Jesus introduced the New Covenant, He did the greatest job of simplifying. He brought an end to the list of hundreds of rules contained in the Old Covenant and He showed how all those rules can be summarized in two rules.

Love God and Love Others

- Matthew 22 -

If you do those two things, you will be effectively following the Old Covenant laws perfectly.

After consolidating the rulebook, Jesus goes on to give the one command of the New Covenant agreement. As He is introducing the concept of the New Covenant during the Last Supper, Jesus said this in John chapter 13:

"A new command I give to you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so must you love another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

- John 13:34-35 NIV

And then again in John 15, Jesus said:

"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you." - John 15:12 NIV

And then a few verses later:

"This is my command, love each other." - John 15:17 NIV

That's three times in the same talk, during the Last Supper, that Jesus repeats the command and it's the only command He gives His disciples.

The Apostle Paul goes to great lengths to reinforce this. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul is helping these churches let go of the bad habits they have of wanting to create lots of rules for the church people to follow. It was the Jewish Christians who had the most difficult time adjusting to the New Covenant of Jesus. The Old Covenant mindset of creating and enforcing lots of rules was so deeply hardwired into them that Paul had to come down hard on them to help them let go of the Old Covenant mindset.

For example:

Circumcision was an important law in Jewish life that was no longer necessary to those who were now following Jesus and trying to live the Gospel Lifestyle. The problem in Galatia was that there were 'Christians' trying to enforce the law and require non-Jewish believers to be circumcised. Paul said in Galatians 5:1-6, that if you're trying to get close to God by following a bunch of rules then you are not a Christian at all, you have nothing to do with Jesus and you're definitely not living the Gospel Lifestyle.

We still struggle with this today. It's tempting to focus our efforts on sin avoidance. What are the things I shouldn't do because I don't want to make God mad? So, we create lists of sins that people should avoid so that God will be pleased with us, thinking that if God is pleased with us then we will be blessed by God. This is all Old Covenant thinking, which Paul says has nothing to do with Christ. You may have grown up in a church that taught in a much more Old Covenant way rather than New Covenant.

*For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."
- Galatians 5:14 NIV*

This is so important! Every list of rules in the Old Covenant law will be fulfilled perfectly if you follow the one command of the New Covenant of loving others. Every list of rules your church told you to live by is fulfilled in a far more effective way if we obey the one command of Jesus to love others.

We see this repeated throughout the New Testament. Sometimes it's phrased love others, sometimes love each other, sometimes love your neighbor, sometimes do unto others, but it's the same one command we have in our faith.

For this reason, the most helpful question we can ask ourselves in any situation is, "**What does love require?**"

This is the defining question of the Gospel Lifestyle. This one question does an amazing job of positioning our hearts and mind to obey the one command Jesus gave us. It's a far better question than asking, 'Is this a sin?' which is an Old Covenant-based question that we don't need to ask anymore.

Let's practice this in real-life scenarios:

Let's say you're married and on a business trip. You get dinner at the hotel after a day of long meetings. You're sitting at the bar, and you see an old friend you haven't seen in years, and you spend the rest of the dinner catching up on life with each other. You're tempted to flirt a bit with this old friend of the opposite gender. Let's pause here and ask a couple of questions.

The rules-based Old Covenant question to ask here would be, 'Is it a sin to flirt with my old friend?' If you were able to flip through all the Old Covenant commands, which lists sins, you would see there is no rule against some 'innocent flirting'. Since there is no rule, you'd feel

somewhat free to flirt away. It's easy to play this scenario out and see how, more often than not, a rules-based religion isn't as effective. Adultery rarely starts with adultery. It starts with far more innocent decisions that aren't technically against the rules but move us in the wrong direction.

Alternatively, let's ask the question, what does love require of me in this situation right now? Would it be loving to my spouse to flirt with this other person? Clearly no. Would it be loving to this other person who is also married? No. Would it be the most loving thing for me to do for my kids, who are at home, to flirt with this person? No. Do you see how much more effective this question that centers us on Jesus' command is?

Let's go back to Galatians 5:1, a verse we read earlier but skipped over.

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. - Galatians 5:1 NIV

In Christ, we have been given freedom that never existed in the Old Covenant. We are free to determine how best to love others in whatever circumstance we find ourselves in.

For some, drinking alcohol would not be what love would require of them. For others, in certain situations, it is. One moment it could be perfectly fine to drink alcohol, and a few moments later, it could be unloving to do so. It's no longer about obeying a black-and-white rule. **We're actually held to a higher standard now; the standard of God's love.**

Jesus made this same point while preaching the famous Sermon on the Mount we find starting in Matthew 5. We read this part in Matthew 5:21:

"You have heard it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder'...But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgement." - Matthew 5:21-22 NIV

It's not just about avoiding murdering someone. It's also about how we treat people in the first place. Ideally, we avoid getting to a place in a relationship where we want to murder them... right?

Jesus' command to love others is far more demanding. It asks us to love **always**. Following the list of rules gives us so many loopholes to sin. Asking "What does love require?" takes away every loophole.

In order to obey Jesus in this way, we need the help of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus sent to us. The Holy Spirit is always available to empower us, and give us wisdom, self-control, courage, and all the other fruit of the Spirit. We need to ask the question, "What does love require?" The Spirit is the one who gives us the ability to know and follow through on the answer to that question and love others the way Jesus does.

What Does Love Require?

This one question is helpful to ask ourselves in any situation.

This one question defines the Gospel Lifestyle.

This one question intentionally positions our hearts and mind to obey the one command Jesus gave.



**We live life
in community
with each other**

Community is one of the most central aspects of the Gospel Lifestyle.

As Jesus called each of the disciples to '*Follow me*,' we see they immediately joined a community. A community that lived together, almost as an extended family would. It was in the context of a family-like community that authentic discipleship happened. Discipleship is the process of training people to live like Jesus. Jesus told us in Matthew 28:19 to "...go and make disciples of all nations."

However, in our church context, discipleship has often been removed from the communal environment. Instead, it has turned into a program that happens AT church. However, what is modeled in the Gospels and throughout the New Testament is a communal environment that provides the best setting for holistic discipleship.

Throughout most of church history, this setting would have been obvious and hardly worth discussing. Most cultures were classified as communal cultures. It was not until recent history that the development of an individualistic culture came to be. This individualistic culture can be seen in and through America today.

What does it mean to be an individualistic culture? It means people are trained from a young age to think of their needs and what is best for them as individuals (or maybe their immediate family) as a priority over the needs of a larger group. In contrast, if you grew up in a more communal culture, you would be taught to prioritize the group's needs over and above your personal needs or your immediate family's personal needs.

From a social, political, and economic standpoint, both individualistic and communal societies have pros and cons. Instead of focusing on those differences, we will analyze how an individualistic culture can negatively affect our ability to live the Gospel Lifestyle.

Here's the main issue: The hyper-individualism of our culture in America interferes with living the Gospel Lifestyle. These two ways of life are at odds with each other. To live the Gospel Lifestyle, we must reject a "Jesus and me" mindset and instead live in Community with one another. We need to push back on the individualistic instincts that continually draw us away from the type of Community we see lived out in the Gospels and early church.

What is Church?

For many Americans, church is a place we go (usually in a building) to attend a service. Depending on our church traditions, we likely have expectations of what a church service should contain. For some, there may be an order of prayers, a certain number of worship songs, specific types of songs, announcements made by video or on stage, a sermon, or maybe even a time to meet someone sitting near you. For many, a few or all of those elements ARE Church.

However, that is *not* how the New Testament describes Church at all.

Church is not somewhere we go; Church is who we are.

Anytime two or more of us are gathered together, Church is happening. Church does not have to be in a building. Church does not have to include singing or a sermon. All of those various elements are NOT requirements of Church. Church is the gathering of believers. That's it!

One of the most frequent Greek words we see when Church is referenced within the New Testament is '*Koinonia*'.

Typically, we see *Koinonia* translated into English in three ways:

1. Fellowship
2. Sharing
3. Communion

Communion can mean both giving and receiving of the cup and bread, the sacraments, or it refers to the relational communion we experience with each other and God. We were created to have communion with God and each other.

Koinonia

In the New Testament, we see something much deeper and more significant occurring whenever there is Koinonia.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. - Acts 2:42-47 NIV

Here are some of the primary values seen in this passage from Acts and other similar scriptures. These values help inform what Community life as lived out by the Gospel Lifestyle looks like:

1. They share life with one another, like extended family.
2. Everyone in the Community is known.
3. Everyone contributes and participates in the Community.
4. They break bread together.
5. They study and live out the words and actions of Jesus.
6. They welcome everyone and anyone into their group.
7. Everyone participates in prayer together.

Side note: *Community is not a concept unique to the New Testament! We see the role that Community plays in the very nature of God. Our eternal God, being one God but in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Descriptions of the Trinity reveal an intimate relational*

connection based on the love of all three persons of the Trinity. Together the three persons are God. Community is a part of who God is and how He shows His love.

We see God's preference for Community life as a primary means by which to bring restoration. He chose the nation of Israel to be a large community that modeled righteousness and justice as a community. That model of Community was intended to be a light to other nations, and through them, God would bless all the other nations of the earth. God was about Community prior to creation, in the Garden of Eden, through the Old Covenant, and then was taken to a new level by Jesus. In the end, Israel was not faithful on its side of the bargain. Regardless, even in the Old Covenant, God intended for Community to be front and center in His mission to restore all things. When it came to community, Jesus challenged the status quo.

Jesus often surprised people by gathering with unexpected people in unexpected places at unexpected times.

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" - Matthew 9:9-11 NIV

During Matthew's time, religious people had specific expectations of who you were to associate with, who you were to eat meals with, and how to gather with others as a good religious person. Jesus blew up those expectations and created a new way to live! In this example, He organized a gathering in Matthew's home where other tax collectors (people who had something in common with each other) broke bread and entered into Community with Christ.

Being made in God's image, we are hard-wired for Community. Every human desires to be a part of a community, even if it proves difficult to accomplish. One of the most attractive and compelling aspects of the Gospel Lifestyle to those who aren't actively following Jesus is the authentic Christian Community. If lived well, there may be no better way to reach and love our neighbors, many of whom long for real Community.

There are two primary elements to connecting people into Community that Cornerstone Fellowship is working towards: Proximity and Affinity.

Proximity

There is a direct correlation between the depth of Community and the proximity of Community. It is easier to be in Community with people who are physically near you than people far away. Obvious, right? Yes, but it still needs to be pointed out. One of the drawbacks to large churches is that people tend to drive from long distances, from all sorts of neighborhoods, to attend a service that fails to offer authentic Koinonia. Efforts to foster more Community are hindered by the distance people live from each other.

Group Discussion

Below is a list of questions designed to help your group unpack, process, and apply the material you read and spent time personally reflecting on. Of course, you are welcome to answer a few or all of them and/or supplement your own questions.

- Describe a time in your life where you lived in genuine, koinonia-like Community.
- What obstacles prevent us, in our culture, from living in Community?

Notes: _____

[illegible]



**We live life on
mission with
each other to
restore all
things**

God's mission is to restore ALL things.

Our God is a missionary God. Since sin entered our world, God has been on a mission to restore things to how they were intended to be.

We saw God's mission in motion during the Old Covenant time. The time when He chose the nation of Israel to be light to the other nations; A model for God's ability to bring righteousness and justice to this broken world. Unfortunately, Israel was unable to remain faithful to their part of the deal. We see that God's restoration plan was always going to require Jesus.

Restoration of Everything

Let's first focus on the reality that everything will be restored. All things! And this restorative project has already begun.

Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. - Acts 3:21

This verse comes amid the Apostle Peter's sermon in front of the temple in the city of Jerusalem. This happened shortly after Pentecost, the day when the Holy Spirit descended on the Church. Peter is referencing the second coming of Jesus, making it clear that Jesus will restore everything. This is consistent with what the Apostle John wrote in Revelation:

"Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,' for the first heaven, and first earth had passed away...I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God...And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!'" Revelation 21:1-5

In John's apocalyptic vision, we get some great details about what happens when Jesus returns. First is the reality that heaven comes down to earth. At the end of time, we don't go to heaven; heaven comes to earth. The New Heaven and Earth, or New Jerusalem, are descriptions of the complete answer to the prayer Jesus taught us, saying, 'May your kingdom come on Earth as it is in Heaven.'

These verses conclude with the grand proclamation from God the Father that He is making everything new! Not some things, not just human souls, EVERYTHING! All of His good creation will be fully restored to its original purpose, like the garden of Eden.

However, not every Christian is aligned with this good news. Many Christians have been taught that the world will continue to get worse and worse over time. And then, at a certain point in time, the tribulations spoken of in Revelation will come. Then Jesus will rescue us from this pit of

darkness (earth) and take us to heaven. For much of the last century, this end-of-time way of thinking has been the predominant viewpoint on what will ultimately happen. Unfortunately, this viewpoint comes from a poor interpretation of many apocalyptic texts over time.

The most common verse that is used to justify a view of the earth getting thrown into the fire is when the Apostle Peter says this in 2 Peter 3:10

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar: the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.”

It's easy to remove this verse from its context and Peter's original meaning, but that has led many astray. Peter (as well as many other biblical authors) uses fire as a metaphor to describe a refining process. Fire is used to cleanse and purify. It's used to filter out what is not meant for the coming Kingdom of Heaven. Peter is not referring to destruction but refinement.

Other references to the world being destroyed, especially in the book of Revelation, are not referring to the destruction of God's good creation. The word 'World' in the Apostle John's writings typically refers to the empires of this world. These empires (like Rome or Babylon in their day) represent the opposite of what the Kingdom of God will be, and they will ultimately be destroyed.

The authors of the Bible are clear that God's good creation isn't going down the road of destruction; rather, it's being renewed.

That renewal is not just something that will happen someday. It's happening now! Check out what Jesus says in Luke 4:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”
- Luke 4:18-20

Side note: *As we will talk about later, He has commissioned us to continue the restoration project on His behalf, empowered by the Holy Spirit.*

God's restoration plan is well underway, and He calls each of us to participate in that plan to restore **all things**. Yes, Jesus will do the heavy lifting, especially when He returns to bring a new heaven and a new earth. However, that does not mean there is no significant restoration happening right now! Scripture indicates that the restorative work we do now will eternally be a part of the new heaven and the new earth.

As N.T. Wright said:

You are not oiling the wheels of a machine that's about to roll over a cliff. You are not restoring a great painting that's shortly going to be thrown on the fire. You are not planting roses in a garden that's about to be dug up for a building site. You are — strange as it may seem, almost as hard to believe as the resurrection itself — accomplishing something that will become in due course part of God's new world.

Our participation in Church (gathering with believers) is about signing up to help with the grand mission that God has organized.

Unfortunately, the consumeristic culture we live in has led to a greatly diminished view of what church participation is.

Wait...What is consumerism?



Consumerism is a way of life and worldview embedded in American culture. It affects every aspect of how we live life. Consumerism drives us to seek happiness and fulfillment through the never-ending pursuit of more experiences and possessions.

Unfortunately, many evangelical churches in America, like Cornerstone Fellowship, have gone too far down the wrong path of consumeristic church engagement strategies. As a result, most American Christians have a predominantly consumeristic view of what the Church is for.

For many decades, consumerism has made its way into Church life with very negative effects. Consumerism can cause people to view the Church as a place to provide what they want and meet their needs, all hoping to be fulfilled by the experience. Consumerism can lead to the seeker-friendly church movement. This causes churches to cater to the average American's needs, who view the Church as another good or service designed to fulfill them. That is never what the Church was designed to be. While this style of engagement with a church DOES attract people, it's essential to pause and dig deep into the question, What's next? What is next for that person who attends a service only for the experience? What is next for them on their faith journey?

Attending church is not in the same category of experiences such as going to a concert or a spa. It is not designed to provide everything you want without expecting much in return. Instead, Church should be thought of as joining a really connected, loving team, a team involved in a restoration project requiring a lot of blood, sweat, and tears.

Let's think about this in a real-life scenario:

Think about a time when you have been part of a team working towards a common goal: a sports team, a dance team, a class, a project, a club, or a workgroup. You get the idea. Teams are built of individuals who have been given different gifts and abilities (*1 Corinthians 12*). Even though those gifts and abilities may sometimes cause conflict or strife, those same gifts and

abilities often allow each team to accomplish more. However, working with and in a team takes time. It takes cooperation, determination, and grit to look beyond the here and now and work through the hours needed to hit the target. You are a part of something larger than yourself. And the same is true about what God calls us to. We are a diverse but unified team on mission.

Saying “YES” to Jesus

1. The Holy Spirit begins a restoration plan in our lives!
2. We are called to be part of His GREATER restoration plan of this world! A plan that is way bigger than any individual in the group.

Here is the thing about saying “yes” to Jesus: When we say “yes” to Him, we are not just saying “yes” to eternal salvation, or in other words... the finished product.

When we say “yes” to Jesus, we are not just saying “yes” to living life in a Community. We are not just saying “yes” to getting together with like-minded people, connecting with one another, and talking about Holy things.

When we say “yes” to Jesus, we are also saying “yes” to actively participating in God’s mission to make all things new. God invites us, the Church, into His mission of restoration.

To engage with His mission, we have to understand that the Church, as Jesus defines it, does not exist only for our benefit.

We exist for the Church, and the Church exists for the world.

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer said:

The Church is the Church only when it exists for others...not dominating, but helping and serving.

With that, we get a sense of the work involved when we are invited into God’s mission.

Side note: What does the word “mission” mean?

Now... *Mission* may sound like a word you’re used to hearing... But you may be surprised to hear that the word *mission* does not appear in most English Bibles. However, the Latin verb *Mittere* (meaning to send), where we get our word “mission” corresponds to the Greek verb *Apostellein*, which occurs 136 times in the New Testament. So, anytime we see Jesus use the phrase *sent* or *send*, in the full understanding of the term, we see that Jesus is putting them... *on mission*.

Like in John 20, after the resurrection, when He appeared to His disciples, Jesus said:

“Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” - John 20:21

Church On Mission

The difference between being a church WITH a mission and being a church ON mission is significant.

Unfortunately, the Church in the 21st century has looked at *mission* as more of a program or department alongside other programs or departments: Outreach, Christian Education, Worship, Care, Students, Kids, etc., that seeks to serve the church's mission.

When we talk about being *on mission* (and we say it a lot), we want to be very clear: we are not talking about adding more missions programs, expanding departments, or asking for more financial support for those endeavors. While all are helpful and with great intentions, those are not our focus. When we say that we are focusing on becoming a missional church, we want to disciple YOU to be ON MISSION.

Let's look at that from another angle. From now on, instead of bringing people TO church, we want to bring church TO people.

Therein lies the big difference! A church WITH a mission sends its congregation to witness for the church. It typically allows people to do this at their leisure, comfort, and personal conviction. However, a church ON mission knows that each member of its congregation is sent by God to live out the words and actions of Jesus. Every follower of Jesus within that community is compelled to do the work of God's restoration plan right where they are at all times.

Being on mission means we are all being sent by God to GO and make disciples. And so often, when we hear that, we think, "Wait, wait, wait. Where are you sending me?" For some, that DOES mean moving to a foreign country and living overseas. But, for most of us, God has sent us to where we already are!

He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." - Acts 1:7-8

Jesus was speaking to His disciples here. Did you catch what He told them about where they were to witness? The very first place he mentions is the city they were in!

Everywhere you find yourself is an opportunity to live out the words and actions of Jesus.

A church ON mission

So... a church ON mission is:

Externally focused. They are deeply connected to and partnered with the community. The church is not focused on its facilities; instead, it focuses on demonstrating Christ's love and offering

Community to a hurting and hopeless world.

Culturally engaged without assimilating. They are connected with the communities they are serving. They are rooted in and, to some degree, reflect the culture of their communities and neighborhoods. However, they do not compromise their beliefs because of any culture or subculture's opinions, views, or ideas.

Cultivating radical generosity. They are radically generous towards justice and the needs of the poor, widows, orphans, and disadvantaged.

Preaching the Gospel. They preach the Gospel, not just with words but also through sacrificial service, character, compassion, and discipleship.

This is what we are saying “yes” to when we say “yes” to Jesus and living *on mission*.

Integration of Community and Mission



One of the things Jesus clearly modeled for us is how to disciple. Not only did He model how to disciple, but He also gave us the great commission in Matthew 28, telling us, ‘*Go into all the world and make disciples...*’

We recognize how vital a deep, relational, family-like Community is to the Church. However, this type of Community reaches a new level when you bring in God’s mission to restore all things and OUR calling into that mission.

The more we study the words and actions of Jesus, the more we can clearly see that Jesus models discipleship primarily through the integration of **Community** and **Mission**. The combination of these two foundational parts of the Church creates the optimal space for discipleship to occur.

Over and over, we see Jesus call people directly into Community! Even before the disciples understood who Jesus was and believed in Him as their Savior, they entered into Community with Him and other disciples. We then see them participating in the traveling mission of Christ to heal, restore, teach, and love. We even see Jesus send them out in groups of two on a mission.

If you grew up in church, the word discipleship likely evokes thoughts of meeting 1:1 with someone older than you. This person was to mentor you and teach you the Bible. While that is undoubtedly a good thing, that version of discipleship is relatively narrow and limited in its capacity to mature a person in their faith. Now, suppose those meetings 1:1 occur under the umbrella of both people fully engaged in Community and Mission. In that case, we have ourselves an environment that more closely resembles holistic “discipleship”.

We want to be really good at discipling as Jesus commissioned us to do. Simply having big

weekend church services and occasionally encouraging 1:1 discipleship is not enough. We have to do what Paul, Peter, Lydia, and Timothy did! We are called to develop Missional Communities, compelled by the words and actions of Jesus, that provide opportunities for authentic discipleship.

Missional Communities

A Missional Community is a small to midsize group of people who are in Koinonia with each other. They are living life with one another as a Community that is on mission with Christ.

It's more than a Community Group or Bible Study. It's more than an opportunity to serve others. It's more than a church service. It's the combination of all of those things and more.

When Community and Mission come together, you will see all the other components of the Gospel Lifestyle come to life. Generosity, hospitality, musical worship, prayer, Bible study, and acts of service are activities within the Gospel Lifestyle. Those activities lose a portion of their value if they happen outside of the Missional Community.

Missional Community is the sweet spot of discipleship that results in a magnetic multiplication of the Gospel.

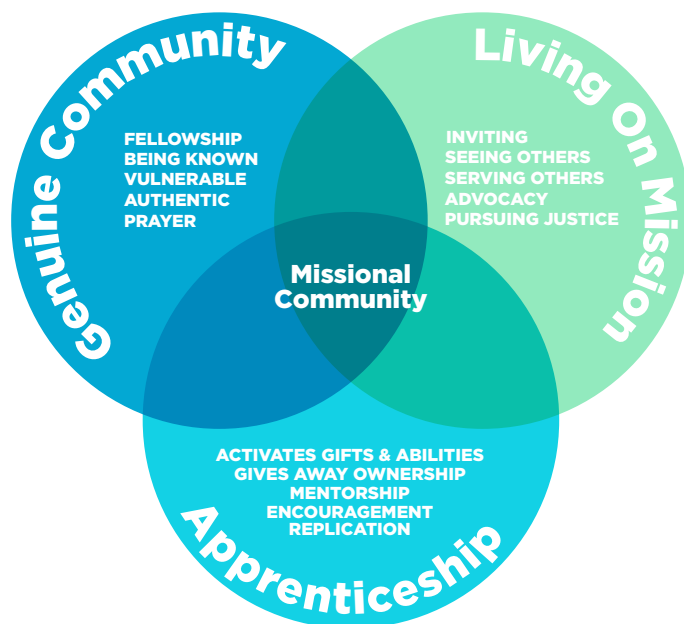
This diagram illustrates the three areas and their qualities that express living in Missional Community.

- **Genuine Community**
- **Living on Mission**
- **Apprenticeship**

Those in Missional Community are connected to and known in a group of people. They advocate for others and are quick to be hospitable to others and anyone in need. They apprentice others to help activate and grow others' gifts, abilities, and passions.

A Missional Community is the ideal launching pad for living out the Gospel Lifestyle. The question is then, how do we possibly integrate this into our lives? What would it look like for you or your family to live as part of a Missional Community?

In the last session, we introduced two new (to Cornerstone Fellowship) and creative ways of



gathering together to lead to a much higher probability of Missional Community development: Neighborhood Churches and Network Churches.

What else is possible? How can you live life with other people in that Koinonia type of way? How can we integrate meaningful purpose outside the group's needs while partnering with God to restore all things?

We believe that the more we pursue answers to these questions, the more we step into living the Gospel Lifestyle. The lifestyle that Jesus called us to when He said to each of us, *'Follow me.'*

Group Discussion

Below is a list of questions designed to help your group unpack, process, and apply the material you read and spent time personally reflecting on. Of course, you are welcome to answer a few or all of them and/or supplement your own questions.

- When in your life have you had a joyful and meaningful sense of purpose in what you were doing?
- Have you been more filled with fear about how the world is falling apart or more filled with hope about how God is and will restore and redeem all things?

Notes: _____



**We seek to
share any
advantages we
have with those
who are less
advantaged**

People living the Gospel Lifestyle are able to recognize when they have been given an advantage in life, and then they dedicate themselves to sharing that advantage with those who have fewer advantages.

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.” - Philippians 2:5-7 NIV

The very birth of Christ is the most obvious and extreme example of this being a central attribute of Jesus. All the comforts, pleasures, and advantages of heaven were willingly sacrificed when He came to earth. Let's think about that moment...Jesus as a baby, in a manger, with His life immediately threatened, had to flee to Egypt and become a refugee. Talk about giving over an advantage for the sake of others! This radical act of giving up the heavenly presence of the Father so that WE could enter into the heavenly presence of the Father is a guide on how to live life. We'll never be able to match Jesus' capacity or magnitude of sharing our advantage, but still, the Gospel Lifestyle imitates Christ.

Generosity and **Serving Others** are classic Gospel values that we see highlighted by Jesus. The Church has done a good job of emphasizing and teaching these values in recent history. However, the handing over of advantage or the sharing of our advantages is a more comprehensive Gospel value that is the foundation of both **Generosity** and **Serving others**.

It is possible to give away a good portion of money and serve those in need, all the while maintaining our advantage over those we're giving to and serving. To follow Christ also means we sacrifice advantage to bless others.

Let's take a look at the story of The Rich Young Ruler to get more insight.

Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?”. “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.” “Which ones?” he inquired. Jesus replied, “You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as yourself.” “All these I have kept.” the young man said. “What do I still lack?” Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” When the young man heard this he went away sad, because he had great wealth. - Matthew 19:16-22 NIV

This young man was generous. We know that because of how faithfully he obeyed the Old Covenant laws. He would have been a faithful tither. He would have been the type of person to help those in need. Isn't that what Jesus is asking us to do?

Well, yes and no. The problem that Jesus is pointing out in this man, and in all of us, is that we can check all the religious boxes and still hold onto our advantages over other people.

It's like the person who does good work by serving the local working homeless. This person shows up at the food kitchen to generously serve a group of people who live in their car and are struggling to make ends meet. At the same time, however, this person is voting against the construction of new housing or affordable housing in a housing-deprived market. Because this person is a homeowner, their vote to restrict more housing will ensure there is a limited supply, allowing the value of their home to continue to rise. This person has prioritized the protection of their advantages by making sure the equity in their home continues to go up as a result of the housing shortage. As they vote to ensure their own advantage grows, they're also ensuring that other people become more disadvantaged by not having access to affordable housing. All while at the same time, this person pats themselves on the back for doing the good work of serving those in need at the local food kitchen.

The Gospel Lifestyle includes generosity and serving others but prioritizes the sharing of advantage as even more important.

The Kingdom of God, which has partially already come to earth, is an upside-down Kingdom. Although the world prioritizes acquiring and holding onto as many advantages as you can, those following Jesus are willing to sacrifice their advantage. The Beatitudes in Matthew chapter 5 highlight this well in talking about who is blessed in the Kingdom of God, the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers.

Matthew 20:1-16 highlights this value a couple of times, starting with the Parable of the Workers. The paraphrased story goes like this:

"The owner of a field hired workers to work the field for the day for one denarii. Some workers started early in the morning, others started midday and some started near the end of the day and only worked for a little while. At the end of the day the owner paid them all one denarii as promised. However, the workers who had been there all day complained that that wasn't fair. Then the owner says 'Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am so generous.' And then Jesus, in explaining this parable, says to all of us, 'So the last will be first, and the first will be last.'"

Our American way of life is often centered around working hard to 'get ahead'. What does it mean to 'get ahead' in this life? In our context, it means to get ahead of others to gain more and more advantages. Jesus turns this upside down and shifts our focus AWAY from 'getting ahead' and TOWARDS helping others come alongside us instead of making sure they're behind us.

Later in Matthew 20, the mother of the disciples James and John went to Jesus to ask a favor. She asked if her sons could sit on Jesus' right and left when He is on His throne. She's looking to get any advantage or higher status she can get for her sons and, by extension, herself. Here's part of Jesus' response:

"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup,

but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.” When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” - Matthew 20:22-28 NIV

It is normal to deeply desire security, comfort, and control for ourselves and our families. Apart from the grace of Christ, we will all go to great lengths to acquire and hang onto any advantage we can that helps us maintain and increase our security, comfort, and control. We strongly resist anything that threatens those things. However, when Jesus calls us to follow Him, a part of that call is the need to surrender our security, comfort, and control to Christ.

A reality of our fallen world is that some people are given more advantages in life than others. Where you are born, the color of your skin, the language you were taught to speak as a child, the worldview you were raised in, your physical health, and your gender, along with so many other factors, all work to give us certain advantages or disadvantages in life. We can be born into certain advantages, advantages we did nothing to earn or deserve. Other advantages are things we worked hard to earn or achieve. Either way, Jesus instructs us on how to use those advantages for the benefit of others.

Let’s say you were born a Jew in Jesus’ day, the Romans had the advantages over you, advantages they did not share. Or, if you were born during Jesus’ day in Samaria, generally speaking, you were disadvantaged in many ways compared to the Jewish people living all around you. The nation of Israel at that time put systems in place to disadvantage Samaritans politically, economically, and socially. And if you were born as a Jew during the period when they were exiled in Babylon, you were born into certain disadvantages as a captive foreigner in a pagan society intending to oppress you.

Every culture or society in the history of the world has systems that give advantages to some and disadvantages to others. That includes every culture today! Jesus calls us to evaluate any advantages we have been given and to use those advantages to serve those less privileged.

Let’s look at an example here:

The story of the Apostle Paul using the advantages of his Roman citizenship is a great example for us. It’s unclear how exactly Paul qualified for Roman citizenship at birth. We do know he was born in Tarsus, a free Roman city. There were significant systems in place throughout the Roman Empire that gave Roman citizens significant advantages over non-citizens. Prior to Paul’s conversion, he used this advantage to hold other people down, specifically Christians. However, after Jesus met him on the road and changed his life, Paul began to use this advantage for the benefit of others. There are great stories in Acts 16 and 22 of Paul using this advantage not to keep others down but to advance the mission of the Church.

When we say “yes” to following Jesus, life flips upside down for us regarding our priorities. We shift from prioritizing the advantages that help and protect us to seeking ways to share or hand over our advantage to those with less.

A growing concern at CF is the perceived increase in the number of ‘Christians’ who we see fighting to hang on tightly to their advantages, or the number of advantaged people denying they have any advantage at all. When people who believe in Jesus fight to have control in society to gain or maintain advantages, it really works against the Gospel. This control is the antithesis of what it means to be a Jesus-follower, and it causes the surrounding culture to want nothing to do with the Church.

Justice

One of the ways we share advantages is by using our time, resources, and influence to seek justice. Our God is a God of justice. Justice is one of the attributes of love. Our participation in God’s mission to restore all things is the work of identifying which groups of people are struggling as a whole and what systems are in place that are creating this injustice (whether or not the system was intentionally or unintentionally created).

Let’s go back to what we just mentioned. In any culture or society, there are systems in place that advantage some and disadvantage others. By nature, that is what injustice is! It was the existence of **injustice** that made Jesus the angriest He ever became during His ministry.

Shortly after Palm Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem, and this happened:

Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. “It is written,” he said to them, “My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers.” - Matthew 21:12-13 NIV

How the poor and outsiders were treated by the religious and political leaders of the day filled Jesus with righteous anger. They used a religious system to get more money from the poor, which was an outrageous injustice. The space used was called the Court of Gentiles, the only area a non-Jew could come to hear of Yahweh and learn or worship. Filling the area of the temple with money changers and dove merchants kept people from God, all to gain money off the backs of the poor.

This example is one of the many Biblical examples of God standing against injustice. Jesus’ strategy to fix this problem wasn’t to refund money to the poor who were taken advantage of. That would have been a band-aid solution. Instead, He went after the power structures in place that were creating and perpetuating the injustice in the first place. Correcting systems of injustice is the best long-term way to correct that which disadvantages some. Generosity towards those who are disadvantaged is great, but to give money to the disadvantaged while turning a blind eye to the very system that created that disadvantage in the first place is not good enough.

To bring this closer to home, if you are born black in America, you are disadvantaged in many ways. For black people, as compared to white, income is significantly lower on average, education rates are lower, quality of education is lower, and crime rates are higher. Pick a statistic that relates to well-being, and black people, on average, are behind. Why is this? Is it because black people are intrinsically inferior to white people? The Gospel of Jesus would emphatically say “no”. Based on historical oppression and current-day outcomes, it would be hard to make a case that there aren’t many disadvantages that come with being black in America and many advantages that come with being white.

A similar situation exists with Native Americans. The poverty rate among Native Americans is double the poverty rate of the rest of our country as a whole. Why is this the case? Are Native Americans innately less capable of earning a living because of their ethnicity, or are there structures in place (today and historically) that create more negative economic outcomes?

As followers of Jesus, our role is to identify advantages and disadvantages and then figure out what we can do to help level the playing field. We see Jesus doing this continually throughout the Gospels. His words and actions always made the people with more advantages unhappy, to the point where they not only wanted to kill Him...but did.

When Jesus returns, He will level the playing field once and for all, for everyone! For example, the caste system in India that gives special advantages to some and restricts those advantages to others will be eliminated, as will every other unjust system this broken world has created. We all long for that day, but we don’t have to sit on our hands and wait. The work of breaking the chains of injustice began when Jesus inaugurated the coming of the Kingdom of God, and that work continues to this day. It will continue until He brings it to completion one day.

Generosity

Another way in which we share our advantages is through the Gospel value of generosity. Jesus talks about money in the Gospels more than most other topics. It’s a critically important value for Jesus.

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also...no one can serve two masters. Either you will hate one and love the other, or you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.” - Matthew 6:21-24 NIV

In Luke 19, we read:

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.” But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord!

Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” - Luke 19:1-10 NIV

We see in the story of Zacchaeus the convergence of salvation, advantage, justice, and generosity. The Romans were an enemy to the Jewish people as their occupation continued to limit the freedom and independence of the nation of Israel. So for Zacchaeus, a Jewish man, to betray his own people and partner with the Romans to collect taxes from the Jews and hand it over to the Romans was a despicable act in the eyes of all Jews.

Zacchaeus’ wealth originated from injustice. In Christ’s presence, not only was Zacchaeus willing to give money away, but he was also willing to share his advantages as a tax collector! He was willing to go back and correct the injustice he caused. The problem was much deeper than just a generosity issue, but generosity is **always** a part of the solution.

Jesus’ call to generosity is radical. He doesn’t mention anything about a tithe of 10%, and in fact, He regularly requires more in the Gospel stories. However, He doesn’t make it a black-and-white solution or rule we all can follow. The level of generosity God is calling each of us to is a rather gray area. It should be radical, but it’s hard to get an exact prescription from the New Testament. Instead, we need to ask what does love require of us? We need to continually wrestle with this issue and depend on the Holy Spirit to open our hearts to deeper and broader levels of generosity that cause us to give up some of our advantages and seek justice for the sake of others.



**We include
everyone,
especially those
not like us**

One of the more shocking aspects of Jesus' life was His radical inclusiveness. Those who were marginalized or outcasts of society were the people Jesus spent the most time pursuing. The people who most of society would be ashamed to be around were the people Jesus went out of His way to be around or readily welcomed.

- Woman at the Well
- Healing the Blind Man
- Zacchaeus up in the Tree
- Healing of Mary Magdalene
- Healing of Lepers
- Anointing at Jesus' Feet
- Sinners on the Cross
- Woman caught in Adultery
- Centurion Soldier

Those are just a handful of the many Gospel stories that drive this value home. Let's take a look at a couple of those stories specifically.

In the last chapter, we highlighted how Zacchaeus handed over his advantages in the presence of Jesus. Now let's focus on how different and hated Zacchaeus was. He was different because the Gospel writers went out of their way to mention how small he was. He was an odd man; he was different. And in addition to that, he was hated. His profession was one of the most despicable and despised professions you could have in Israel. He partnered with oppressors to steal money from the oppressed Jewish people. Your average Jewish person would have hated Zacchaeus. Jesus went out of His way to include him.

Or, how about the woman at the well? Almost all Jewish people of the day would have gone out of their way to avoid traveling through Samaria. Samaria is a region between the Galilee area, where much of Jesus' ministry took place and Jerusalem. Most Jews would take the longer journey around Samaria because it was dangerous to go through due to the hatred between the two ethnic groups. However, much to the dismay of His disciples, Jesus chose to go straight through Samaria. Not only that, but He met with a Samaritan woman who lived a scandalous life. A righteous Jewish man would go to great lengths to not be in the presence of this woman. Jesus, however, makes her His first evangelist.

It's human nature to surround yourself, more or less, with people who are similar to you: people with similar life experiences, cultural backgrounds, worldviews, professions, ethnicities, economic statuses, or age demographics. The more a person is like you, the higher the probability is you'll like them.

Unfortunately, more than most other institutions in our society, the Church can represent the most extreme version of this problem. Sunday mornings can be the most segregated time of the week.

"Most of us spend our entire lives avoiding the people Jesus spent His whole life engaging." - Bob Goff

Think about it: *Jesus showed us just how much He desires to disrupt this sinful human tendency that we all have. This is something He did over and over again throughout His entire earthly ministry.*

Just look at what He said in Luke 14:1-14 when He was having dinner at a Pharisee's house.

One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. There in front of him was a man suffering from abnormal swelling of his body. Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him on his way. Then he asked them, "If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?" And they had nothing to say. When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this person your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."
- Luke 14:1-14 NIV

At this point in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus told a series of parables. These parables confronted the way of life of the Pharisees, including how exclusive they were. The Pharisees were notoriously exclusive and legalistic.

To be included in this elite group, you needed to be: **highly educated, ethnically Jewish, a citizen of Israel, religiously Jewish, wealthy, AND an expert rule-follower in regards to the Old Covenant laws embedded in culture, and so on.**

In addition to going to Synagogue every Saturday, the Pharisees would host dinners or banquets. However, the Pharisees were very shrewd with who they invited to these dinners. For them, it was about status, power, and privilege.

The hubris in this group was astounding, and they represented the polar opposite of the Gospel Lifestyle. These are the same people who pass by the injured traveler in the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. These are the older brothers in the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32.

Jesus, and then later the Apostle Paul, went to great lengths to confront and clarify the Pharisees' hypocrisy and way of living. They had a disregard for human dignity that did not line up with the Gospel Lifestyle. Jesus calls us to love all people, especially those that are not like us.

What do we mean by 'especially those that are not like us', and why are we emphasizing that? It's easy to love people similar to you. Everyone does that. The challenge in this Gospel value isn't including people like us, it's including people different from us. People with different cultural backgrounds, different religious backgrounds, political opinions, of a different gender, ethnicity, physical capabilities, economic status, and so on.

The Gospel is radically inclusive and for everyone. There is no outsider vs. insider. There is no them vs. us. In fact, Jesus often had harsh words for those who were exclusive to those within their community. In Luke chapter 14, Jesus continued on to tell another parable:

Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses... The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' 'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'" - Luke 14:16-24 NIV

There are many interpretations of this parable:

- The most common is that Israel is the invited guest. However, because they did not receive Jesus, He then turned to the Gentiles.
- The other interpretation is that those well-off and included in a power structure often have no need for God. They make excuses. It's the marginalized who find their way into the Kingdom of God by the grace of God.
- A modern-day application is that often it's the 'church people' who miss Jesus! Those on the outside, those who are lowly and don't appear very 'Christian,' are closest to Christ. This harkens back to one of the Beatitudes mentioned a few chapters ago: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.' The poor in spirit don't consider themselves fit for Jesus and don't assume they have it all figured out. That type of humility is what Jesus is looking for, and it's an essential part of the Gospel Lifestyle.

To intentionally go out of our way to include those who are generally not included sounds great, but how often do we do this? What changes to our lifestyle would we need to make to incorporate this essential Gospel behavior into our life?

It is not uncommon for us to struggle today in the same ways people did in Jesus' day. Nationalism, racism, and legalism can creep into a community and foster an exclusive

atmosphere that creates insiders and outsiders. The true Church goes out into the community and welcomes everyone.

Dignity

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. - Genesis 1:27 NIV

Seeing all people as having dignity can be a struggle for us in that we oftentimes don't see people the way Jesus does. Jesus sees everyone at their maximum value. He sees all the ways they were created in the image of God, and He sees who He is making them to be, the perfect version of themselves. We're not Jesus, though. In our sinful nature, we tend to see people's flaws, sins, and shortcomings. We elevate people similar to us, and we minimize people different from us.

Real-life:

Have you ever been watching a sporting event on TV when someone says, "Hey, did you know that athlete is a Christian?" What did you do with that information? If we're Christian ourselves, we naturally elevate the dignity and worth of that person in our minds. The reverse is true also. We can be watching the same sporting event. Someone will say, "That athlete got arrested for marijuana possession a couple of months ago." For some of us, without even consciously thinking about it, we will begin to view this person as 'less than.' We strip away some of the dignity of this person. We can be really good at categorizing people and subconsciously evaluating their level of dignity.

When we treat someone with dignity, we see them as someone special, and we become curious to get to know the narrative of their life. We learn and understand their current situation. In turn, we choose to come alongside them to listen, encourage, show respect, and act in love.

Unfortunately, those on the margins of society are not seen with much worth. If dignity and love are central to our faith, imagine the difference we would see in our communities if we all lived our lives fully embracing these qualities.

Hospitality

The ministry of Jesus tells us story after story where hospitality was present. As we read about the early Church, we see how it revolved around the value of hospitality. We've seen this way of life throughout Church history. People hosted travelers in their homes, Churches met and served dinner in their homes, and Missionaries traveled and stayed in homes.

In almost every situation where *hospitality* is mentioned in scripture, instruction includes people in need, strangers, or outsiders.

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. - Hebrews 13:2 NIV

Share with the Lord's people in need. Practice hospitality. - Romans 12:13 NIV

In its purest form:

True Hospitality = Sharing your space without expecting anything in return.

Many of us live our lives in a way that limits the amount of time we spend with people who are significantly different from us. When we do spend time with others, it is most often people like us.

How do we break out of our bubbles to expose ourselves to those who live differently?

For many of us, we wouldn't even know where to start when we think about being inclusive to people who aren't like us. It takes hard work and intentionality to have a diverse group of people showing the required grace to accept and grow in faith with one another. It takes an understanding and application of dignity. It is challenging to bring together people with different backgrounds, life situations, and perspectives and continually learn from each other and grow in Christ. It requires patience, grace, humility, and really, all the fruits of the Spirit as found in Galatians 5:22-23.

Who in my neighborhood is not like me? What stands in my way of welcoming those around me into my life? What impact could a shift in my approach mean to the community around me?

Practicing Hospitality

At the root of the word hospitality is "hospital." Jesus said, *"It's not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."* (Mark 2:17). When we practice genuine hospitality, we offer space for healing, affection, rest, and shelter, which allows people to *therapeutically experience the love of Jesus*.

There's a humility and vulnerability to being hospitable. Not only do you open up a part of your life to someone else, but you also accept a part of someone else's life into your own.

In practicing hospitality, the goal is to embrace that humility and vulnerability. When many of us think of hospitality, we're actually thinking of *entertaining*. Entertaining puts value on things (how clean is my house? what food am I serving? etc.), while hospitality places people above all else. Don't let your desire to "entertain" prevent you from practicing true, genuine hospitality.

Often, many of us have misplaced hospitality as a spiritual gift. Like we saw above, although Paul mentions hospitality in Romans 12:13, it's not in the actual gifts list, like teaching, serving, and giving. Although it is not a spiritual gift, it's something we are ALL called to!

The Church has also been known to mislabel hospitality. This can be seen in various ways that often are blended with a need in a church building. One clear example of a mislabel is that of a Hospitality Team. This type of team found in a church welcomes people as they walk into a facility where worship services happen. These Hospitality Teams are important as they make sure people have a positive and welcoming experience. Although this is great work, it is not necessarily hospitality in how Scripture models it. The full richness and power of hospitality happen in your home.

For anyone who has had the opportunity to visit the home of someone living in a communal culture, especially in a developing country, you know what hospitality looks like. But more importantly, you know what hospitality FEELS like. A family opens their door and welcomes you into their FAMILY, even though their material possessions may be lacking. As their guest, you are the most important person. Whatever they have, is yours. Whatever they can offer, they offer to you first. Their selfless actions leave you feeling love, worth, dignity, and humility. Isn't that exactly how God wants us to feel through His love??

Think about it: *When you invite someone to your home, you are not just inviting someone in physically. You are opening the door to the potential of that person experiencing generosity, grace, and love that is only present when you are following the nudges of the Holy Spirit and the call of being hospitable. You are allowing room for someone to feel comfortable and safe. You are opening the door to the potential of being a part of someone's faith story as they experience the love of Jesus that they feel through you.*

When we have a sincere desire to share Jesus' love with someone else, what we once considered "mine" becomes "ours." As we invite people into our spaces (whether at home, at work, on a coffee break, at school, or even on a sports field), sharing what we have with them and treating them like family, the Gospel Lifestyle comes to life.

This is precisely where and why Cornerstone Fellowship desires to have gatherings of all different shapes and sizes.

The themes of inclusion and hospitality, so prominent in the Gospel Lifestyle, as explained and demonstrated by Jesus, are completely aligned with what we talked about earlier with the values of Community and Mission. **Hospitality** is the spark that accelerates authentic Community, and **inclusion** leads the heart into a desire to live a life on mission. These are overlapping values that cause us to continue to see how vital Missional Communities are to the Gospel Lifestyle.



— THE —
G O S P E L
Lifestyle
— Conclusion —

WHAT'S NEXT?

We are so thankful that you joined us for the Gospel Lifestyle discussion! The time you spent reflecting, discovering, reading, processing, thinking, talking, sharing, and maybe even wrestling with the questions and content discussed was worth it. Not just for you but for our church.

As the Church, we are 100% passionate about believing in Jesus and 100% passionate about following Him. And yes, as you've read: believing and following are NOT the same things. It is possible, and very common, to believe in Jesus but not regularly follow Him. However, in following Jesus, our belief in Him grows to depths that lead us to a life resembling the beauty of Christ Himself, a life so compelling and attractive to the world around us that we begin to see heaven come to earth in powerful ways.

As we continue to grow our relationship with Jesus, live out our faith journey, and understand the importance of our unique story, it is clear that Jesus calls us to more. He calls us to live the Gospel Lifestyle. And it truly is a LIFE-style. This time was just the beginning of what we hope will be a lifelong pursuit of a lifestyle that points to Jesus in every step. A lifestyle that strives to live by six values we've discussed together:

Value 1: We are compelled by the **words and actions** of Jesus in all we do.

Value 2: We ask, "**What does love require?**" in every situation.

Value 3: We live life in **community** with each other.

Value 4: We live life on **mission** with each other to restore all things.

Value 5: We seek to **share any advantages** we have with those who are less advantaged.

Value 6: We **include** everyone, especially those not like us.

At Cornerstone Fellowship, our mission stands on those values. We exist to develop Missional Community compelled by the words and actions of Jesus. And we are so excited God has placed us on this road for this time and this moment.

Through each person in our various communities living the Gospel Lifestyle, the world will see Jesus.

Be patient with yourself as you look ahead at the road God has YOU on. Lean into the questions that made you pause or the answers shared by someone in your group that challenged you. Before your Group Discussion, carve out some time to work through the Personal Reflection questions found at the end of this guide. By constantly moving forward with an open heart to what Jesus is calling you to, your Gospel Lifestyle will only get better over time.

Personal Reflection

Below is a list of questions designed to help you unpack, process, and identify where you find yourself. You are welcome to answer one or answer all.

What does living a Gospel Lifestyle mean to you?

How have the Gospel Lifestyle values impacted your faith journey?

Describe your relationship with Jesus.

What do you hope your story will look like in the future?

Group Discussion

Below is a list of questions designed to help your group unpack, process, and apply the material you read and spent time personally reflecting on. Of course, you are welcome to answer a few or all of them and/or supplement your own questions.

- What impacted you the most during this time discussing the Gospel Lifestyle material?
- What do you feel called to change or evaluate in your current lifestyle to shift your focus to living out the Gospel Lifestyle?

Notes: _____
