

SEPTEMBER 2021

PRAYER GUIDE

THE BODY OF CHRIST PRAYING CORPORATELY

HOW TO USE **THIS PRAYER GUIDE**

These devotions with prayer prompts are intended to assist our church family as we seek Christ personally in our daily time with Him and corporately during our monthly family prayer service. It is vital that we pursue the Lord in prayer with a humble heart and depend on His guidance and leadership.

**DEFINED BY THE WORD
DEVOTED TO PRAYER
DEPENDANT ON THE SPIRIT**

ALL PREVIOUS PRAYER GUIDES ARE LOCATED ON OUR WEBSITE

WWW.RICHLANDCREEK.COM

Day 1

Back to School: Pray for our Preschool/Elementary Students

Key Scripture: *Deuteronomy 6:4-7* “Hear, Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord you God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. And you shall repeat them diligently to your sons and speak of them when you sit in your house, when you walk on the road, when you lie down, and when you get up.”

As our preschoolers and elementary students go back to school, let us instill in them that they should love the Lord with everything they have. Remind them daily that the Lord is our God and the Lord is one. Remind them of the truths of the gospel and God’s love at every moment you have with them.

As we pray for them, let us pray for their hearts to be focused on the Lord. Let us pray that their hearts are cared for through an abundance of friendships and mentor support. Pray for our children that they would love the Lord and love others well.

As we pray for them, let us pray for their soul and their willingness that when they fully understand the gospel they would turn their life to His Lordship and accept the salvation of the Lord. Pray for their minds that they would grow in truth and be able to focus and learn what they need to in order to succeed in their studies.

As we pray for them, let us pray for their strength. Pray for their physical protection from any threat. Pray for their health during the school year. Pray that they stay safe as they play with their friends on the playground and in sports. Pray that they stay strong as their schedule is very different from last year, and they will need to be flexible to handle it.

We should be taking every opportunity to pray for and teach the children around us. Let your preschooler know you pray for them and encourage them to trust God even when their emotions are different than normal. Let your elementary student know you believe in them because God has a plan for their life.

Questions to Consider:

Who is the preschooler or elementary child in your life you should be praying for? Are you loving the Lord with all your heart, soul and strength and encouraging the children around you to do the same?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for our children to make friendships and for our children to succeed in their studies.
- Pray for our children to stay safe and healthy and for our children to understand and one day trust the gospel.

Day 2

Back to School: Pray for our Middle School Students

Key Scripture: *Philippians 2:12-15 "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world."*

As Christians, we are commanded to live a holy life that stands in opposition to the lifestyle of the world. As we pray for our middle school students, I invite you to reflect on all the challenges they will face as they seek to be blameless and innocent in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation. We might be tempted to feel disheartened as we see the political, social, and spiritual unrest that our students must overcome. Our hope should lie in the powerful hand of God that will work in them.

This passage in Philippians strikes a beautiful balance between our effort and God's work in our sanctification. Paul makes it clear that it is our job as Christians to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. This does not mean that our works earn us salvation, but we should make intentional attempts to be more like Christ. However, our efforts would be in vain if it weren't for the power of God who works in us. Join us and pray that our middle school students may shine as a light in this world because of the gracious work of our Lord in their hearts.

Questions to Consider:

Do you believe that God will keep you blameless and innocent? In what ways are you working out your own salvation?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for our Middle school students returning to school that they will be able to stand firm in the truths of God's Word.
- Pray for our church to have favor with local schools.
- Pray for the schools to have wisdom as they navigate COVID-19.
- Pray for our students to shine in the midst of a dark generation and not fall into peer pressure.

Day 3

Back to School: Pray for our High School Students

Key Scriptures: *Colossians 1:9-12*

Paul's prayer for the church at Colossae should inform our own. Paul starts this section with tireless prayer. He lets the church know that he has continued to pray for them. The church at Colossae is always on Paul's mind. Paul continues to go to the Lord in prayer that they may be filled with the knowledge of God. Paul desires that the church at Colossae gain a robust understanding of God and his will for their lives. He could pray for their comfort, desires, and goals, yet he prays that they would grow in their knowledge of God. He knows what is most important in life is knowing God. Are we praying that our students would have good days at school more than growing in their knowledge of God? He not only prays for the knowledge of God, but he also prays for wisdom.

As our high school students go back to school they will interact with many people and ideas. They will need wisdom as to how to walk worthy of the calling of God in their circles. How to best love their friends who hate their Lord. How to be a gospel witness in the face of adversity. Our high school students will need the right kind of fuel to do this. Look back at verse 11. We will be strengthened by his power according to the Lord's will. We are empowered by the Spirit of God to accomplish the will of God. The Spirit uses our growing knowledge of God to bear fruit in our lives. Spiritual fruit and knowledge of God become the fuel by which the believer lives by. We need the Spirit of God to work and shape our hearts for his glory and honor. Our high school students can't walk worthy of the Lord's calling on their own. They need to be empowered by the Spirit. Church family, the high school students here at Richland Creek Community Church need you. Would you commit to pray for the high school students in our church? Would you pray for our students like Paul prays for the church at Colossae?

Questions to consider:

Have you grown weary in praying for certain things? What is the priority of your prayers? Who is the main subject of your prayers?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that our high school students would grow in their knowledge of God and that they would be given wisdom to navigate their lives.
- Pray that our high school students would walk worthy of the Lord during difficulty.
- Pray that our high school students would be a light to their schools, their neighborhoods, and the nations.

Day 4

Back to School: Pray for our Special Needs Ministry Students

Key Scriptures: *Psalm 121:5-8 and Colossians 1:9-12.*

Entrusting our children to the care of someone else is difficult, especially when in unfamiliar surroundings and if they require additional support with various daily activities. As caregivers, we have to remember to be anxious for nothing (Phil 4:6) and to entrust our children to the Lord. In His love and goodness, He graciously provides His Word to guide us and allows us to come directly to Him in prayer. Therefore, we can have confidence in Him and trust His promises over our children.

We can thank God that our children are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14), that He has placed special gifts inside each of them, and that He knows the plans He has for them (Jer 29:11). Pray for the protection of their physical bodies from harm and for their minds to be guarded from false teachings. Remind them daily that God's love is a place of safety. Pray that our children honor their teachers and all that are in authority. Pray that those responsible for their care will have endurance and wisdom and will honor and be sensitive to the needs of each child. Pray blessings on each child to be able to absorb and apply beneficial lessons they are taught.

In addition to other scriptures, we can use Colossians 1:9-12 in praying for others. Pray that our children will make wise choices, be examples of God's love and kindness, and learn they are witnesses through verbal communication and their actions. Pray for their light to shine before others (Matt 5:16) with the fruits of the spirit, be joyful, be comforted daily by the love and peace that only He can give, sleep sweet each night, have endurance, learn how to live according to His truth, always be strong and courageous, and not to conform to the patterns of this world (Rom 12:2).

Not only do we pray for our children in everyday affairs, but we also pray for their salvation. As we begin a new school year, let us remind them that the greatest thing they can ever learn is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all their mind" (Matthew 22:37-39) and to place their faith in Him.

Questions to Consider: Do you pray over your children/family daily and use Scripture to guide you? Have you taught your children how to pray for themselves and others?

Prayer Prompts:

- That our children will shine with the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).
- Learn to seek and desire God's will for all the decisions they make, no matter the circumstances. Be thankful, full of joy, and daily grow in confidence in You as You created them to be.

Day 5

Back to School: Pray for our College Ministry

Key Scriptures: *Hebrews 12:28-29* “Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.”

Read Hebrews 12:18-29

When you think of college students, you might often think about transition. In fact, everything about their life seems to be in transition. Moving from high school to college is enough change, but add to that becoming an adult, being on your own for the first time, and navigating the college experience. And just as soon as you get your groove, you graduate and make even more transitions.

On top of all of this, the spiritual pressure a college student faces is immense. For a typical Christian college student, they will see their peers or even close friends fall away from the church and their faith in droves. They will be bombarded with numerous ways to indulge in the flesh and sweep their relationship with the Lord under the rug.

But praise Jesus that He has delivered to us something not in transition, not in disarray—an unshakeable kingdom! We have a lasting hope built through sure promises of His salvation and the glory that awaits us who overcome! So, pray for your college students here at the Creek with fervor and urgency! Pray that they devote their entire lives to offering the Lord “acceptable worship with reverence and awe.” Pray that they are filled with the Spirit to combat every temptation and to show forth both the truth and grace of the Lord Jesus.

Questions to Consider:

Do you remember your late teens to early 20's? Did the above description bring back memories for you? How does that affect your prayers for our college students?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that our students would find contentment in the Lord and joy as they pursue His kingdom and His righteousness.
- Pray that they would be bold in their witness to their peers, and the Lord would bring in a great harvest from our college campuses.
- Pray for revival! Pray for revival among college students; but not just there, pray for revival in our church, Wake County, and all those under our influence. May God be glorified in our service to Him!

Day 6

What is Corporate Prayer?

Key Scripture: *Matthew 18:19–20* “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

Both private and corporate prayer are necessary, God-ordained ways of His working in this world. But what’s the difference? Private prayer is personal, intimate time with God, given to us to grow closer to and build a relationship with Him. Corporate prayer fellowship with other believers, which draws us closer to each other and God through sharing burdens. We come together to submit to the will of God. This necessarily means that corporate prayer is audible prayer.

Matthew 18:19–20 is part of the bigger context on church discipline; however, there are some truths we can learn about corporate prayer as well. God’s presence is evidenced in many events recorded in Acts and the Epistles by the working of the Holy Spirit when the church prayed together. Most notably was the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–12), but also on other occasions, such as praying for Peter to be freed from jail (Acts 12:5–10), for Barnabas and Saul when they were set apart for God’s work (Acts 13:1–4), and for peace in the church at Ephesus (1 Tim 2:1–2). We learn from these events that corporate prayer is others-focused and intended for the benefit of the church. When we come together this way, we can expect greater power and authority in our prayers with this heart position.

Asking the Holy Spirit to move within and around our community is necessary for seeing the gospel’s advancement. We, the church, must regularly participate in corporate prayer to be witnesses to the great things He has planned for us.

Questions to Consider:

Do you think the remarkable events of the early church would have happened without regular prayer together? Are you aware that God’s church is created to be a house of prayer (Matthew 21:13a)?

Prayer Prompts:

- Heavenly Father, I pray that you will help me grow in my understanding of the purpose and power of corporate prayer. Lead me to your wisdom about how the Holy Spirit intervenes in our lives and the church through corporate prayer. I pray that you make our church a willing and vibrant community that prays together regularly.
- Pray 1 Timothy 2:1 I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people.

Day 7

How to Pray Corporately

Key Scriptures: *Acts 4:24–26* When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. “Sovereign Lord,” they said, “you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: “ ‘Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one.’

In the Scriptures above, the church is coming together in one voice to praise God for His work by the Spirit through Peter and John. There are many things we can observe about how to pray corporately through these and the subsequent passages. First, we see the church is coming together in one voice; they are all praying for the same thing. Second, their prayers are vertical. They are acknowledging God's sovereignty, praising and thanking Him, proclaiming the necessity of the Spirit, and recalling Scripture. From there (v 29-30), they move into praying for the advancement of the kingdom and the making known of Jesus. In the church today, corporate prayer assemblies will be most powerful when they follow this same structure.

The beautiful thing about these passages is that you can read about the passion of this church. Even if only one person may have been speaking audibly at a time, they were all praying earnestly together. Today's church needs to be the same. The power of assembled prayer comes through the whole body standing in agreement with what is being spoken aloud, each person actively praying alongside. Verse 31 shows us what happens when we pray together, in one voice. The Spirit comes, fills us, and encourages us to speak for the advancement of the kingdom.

Questions to Consider:

Have you ever participated in a corporate prayer assembly? If not, what is keeping you from joining? Will you consider attending the next monthly prayer meeting?

Prayer Prompts:

- Father God, you have shown us the powerful way you work through corporate prayer. I pray that you will grow in me a willing and emboldened heart to pray with my brothers and sisters in Christ. I pray that you will send your Spirit and move in mighty ways through our obedience and passion to pray together.
- Pray Acts 4:31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Day 8

Praying with the Body of Christ

Key Scripture: *Acts 2:42 - “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”*

In this verse, we note praying together comes as part of a list of activities the believers are doing together in the early church. They are learning together, getting to know each other in community, sharing meals, and finally, praying together. Praying is part of the activities of life together in the body. We often think of prayer as something we do primarily alone as a part of our personal time with God. However, the Bible often presents prayer as an activity done corporately. In the Old Testament, the people of God gathered regularly to hear the scriptures read and pray. In the New Testament, the believers in Acts gathered regularly to pray together; it was a foundational part of the early church. It strengthened them to be bold in a hostile culture: “When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31). The Lord also responded to these activities: “And the Lord added to their numbers day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

Corporate prayer also encourages us in a world that can be very discouraging. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 says, “So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.” As Christ-followers, we need boldness, strengthening, encouragement. Praying together as a body of believers is a way we can do this for each other.

Questions to Consider:

When you think about prayer, do you think of it as primarily a time alone, or as a corporate activity with the body? Are you involved in corporate prayer on a regular basis? How could you be if you are not?

Prayer Prompts:

- Lord, in this culture of individualism, I do not always prioritize praying corporately as an important part of body life. Help me to see the great value, strengthening and encouragement that comes from participating in this way. Remind me that I am part of a family of believers in my local church, bound by faith in Christ, celebrating together the hope He brings.
- Pray Psalm 95:1–2 Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.

Day 9

What Corporate Prayer Teaches

Key Scripture: *1 John 5:14* “And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.”

One of the greatest privileges believers have is our ability to communicate directly to God through prayer. Prayer is often an individual act, but it is not limited to this. God, in His grace, has allowed prayer to be something the family of believers does together when the church gathers.

When we look in the book of Acts, we see that the early church made a habit of praying together. Corporate prayer is an opportunity for those present to learn a few specific things about God, about each other, and ourselves. Here are a few observations about what we can learn through corporate prayer:

- How we relate to God.
- How we maintain the unity of the body by caring for one another.
- What the Word rightly teaches about God and how that informs what we believe about God.
- How we should constantly be communicating with God.
- How prayer increases our faith as we trust God to do what we cannot.

The well-known evangelist Billy Graham said this about prayer: “Prayer is more than a wish; it is the voice of faith directed to God.”

In each of these things, we remember that corporate prayer is a communal act involving the whole body of Christ. Speaking of the gathering of God’s people and prayer, John Onwuchekwa in his book on Prayer notes, “*We hear the Word preached, sang and read. And in response, we pray. We gather to meet with him (God) together in large part through prayers that are responses to his word.*” Praying together is a precious gift we have been given as the body of Christ.

Questions to Consider:

Are you engaging with other believers in corporate prayer? If not, why? What do you learn from listening to others biblically pray? Has anyone shown you what biblical prayer looks like? How are you teaching others to pray?

Prayer Prompts:

- Lord, help me use your Word as my source of guidance and substance when I pray. Help me to pray with the right motives and a pure heart.
- Lord, show me how I can be more intentional in caring for others through prayer.

Day 10

Learning to Pray by Listening to Corporate Prayer

Key Scripture: *John 11:41,42 And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me."*

Jesus, being the sinless perfect teacher that He is, does not just simply command us to pray and then leave us in the dark as to how to be effective in our prayer life. He desires that our prayer life be fruitful and that it glorifies our Father in heaven, so He faithfully demonstrates how to pray as well as rebukes those who abuse prayer to gain attention from others. Jesus wants to make sure we do not pray to impress others and warns that if we are tempted to pray to gain popularity, then it's best to pray in private.

Long, haughty prayers that seek to bring attention to oneself instead of glory to God alone must be rejected yet pure, honest, humble prayer in front of others is a form of edification and does indeed glorify God. Jesus displayed a regular and intense prayer life guided by the Holy Spirit and was very intentional in front of his disciples and many others, showing them how to approach God in prayer by His example.

Learning to pray by listening to the earnest, humble prayers of others in our life groups, in worship and prayer services, in our family gatherings and by reading Scripture, including all of Jesus' many examples of prayer is crucial to our walk with the Lord. Calling out to the Father is an awesome privilege and is the mark of a true believer. Be sure to involve yourself as often as possible in groups that demonstrate earnest, effective corporate prayer and seek to join them in one accord trusting not in your own ability but in the work of the Spirit within you to intercede.

Questions to Consider:

Have you found a faithful group of believers to pray with on a regular basis? Name three people who have exemplified and encouraged corporate prayer in your life?

Prayer Prompts:

- Lord, please give me wisdom and discernment as I seek to be involved in corporate prayer. May the Holy Spirit create a strong desire in me to humbly come before You each day so that I too would be like the disciple in Luke 11:1 who asked Jesus "Lord, teach me (us) to pray as John taught his disciples."

Day 11

Old Testament Model of Prayer

Key Scripture: *Nehemiah 9:1-3* “...the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads... and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for a quarter of the day; for another quarter of it they made confession and worshiped the Lord their God.”

Picture it: Jerusalem, 445 BC. The final wave of exiled Israelites returned to their homeland to rebuild the city wall. Following its completion, they gathered “as one man” (Nehemiah 8:1), and Ezra, the priest and scribe, read from the Book of the Law of God. Day by day—for hours at a time—Ezra, the priests, and the Levites, helped the leaders and the people understand the words declared to them. Pressing their lives up against the truth evoked a worshipful response. It moved them to adoration, acknowledgment of sin, and accountability—before God and each other. [Please stop and read Nehemiah 9.]

The people of Israel approached the throne of grace—together—with humble and contrite hearts. With a loud voice, the Levites start with adoration as they praised “the great, the mighty, and the awesome God” (verse 32). They worshiped Him in prayer as they recounted how He demonstrated His steadfast love and faithfulness toward them—from the moment of Creation to that very day. In response to the truth of who God is and what He had done for them, they expressed genuine grief over their sins and “the iniquities of their fathers.” Only as they ascribed to the Lord the glory due His name, could they see themselves as they are—fickle, faithless, and sinful people. Hebrews 4:12 says, “The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit ... and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” With honesty and transparency, they acknowledged the motivations of their hearts. Their godly grief led to repentance, recommitment to obedience, and accountability (verse 38). What an example for us as we seek to love God in prayer!

Questions to Consider:

How much of your prayer time is devoted to adoration and acknowledgment of sin? What additional instruction can you glean from this Old Testament example of prayer?

Prayer Prompts:

- Praise God for the gracious way in which He demonstrates His steadfast love for us. Recount specific examples from your own life.
- Ask God to search your heart and reveal any grievous way in you. Confess and repent of any sin He brings to mind.

Day 12

The Book of Psalms Model of Prayer

Key Scripture: Psalm 95:1–6 Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of Praise! For the Lord is a Great God and a great King above all gods. In His hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are His also. The sea is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the dry land. Oh come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

Prayer is talking to God remembering He is God, the creator of heaven and earth. The Psalms are the word of God, given to us by God to speak back to Him. We find in the Psalms examples of adoration, praise and worship to God, the Father, but we also find words of great sorrow, grief, and fear, crying out to God to rescue or to relieve the Psalmist's pain and fear. Because Christ died on the cross for our sins and as followers of Jesus, we have the privilege to pray directly to God the Father. Ephesians 2:18 tells us through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father, what a life-transforming and joyful privilege we have. In Matthew 6:9–13 and in Luke 11:2–4, Jesus tells His disciples how to pray; we call it the Lord's Prayer. Christopher Ash states that "the Psalms are like an expanded version of the Lord's Prayer or that the Lord's Prayer is the compressed version of the Psalms. Just as the Lord's prayer expresses in brief an adoration for the majesty of God's holiness, a yearning for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, a supplication for God to provide for us all that we need, and a concern to live with pure piety in a sinful world, so we shall find that the Psalms express all these expansively and majestically."

Questions to Consider:

When you find yourself in a difficult circumstance, do you call on God first or someone else? Do you have time set aside to be alone with God to pray? If no, why?

Prayer Prompts:

- Father, thank you for the Psalms and the rest of the Scriptures that we can know
- You rightly. Please forgive me when I fail to call on You first when struggling with things of this world. Create in me a clean heart, oh God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Day 13

New Testament Model of Prayer

Key Scripture: Acts 4:24, 31 “...they lifted their voices together to God... And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.”

Please read Acts 4:5–31.

In an article entitled “10 Things You Should Know about Corporate Prayer,” Megan Hill wrote, “The church at prayer is a body at work, an army at war, and a congregation at worship.” Have you ever thought of your brothers and sisters in Christ as fellow workers, warriors, and worshipers in prayer? In today’s passage, we see just that.

The Lord Jesus Himself commissioned Peter, John, and the others, to testify to what they had seen and heard. Matthew 28:18–20 says, “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.’” As His servants, their allegiance remained with Christ and they sought to fulfill the purpose for which He called them—the work of the kingdom. Even in the face of opposition, their circumstances did not discourage them.

United in mind and in the Spirit, these members of the body of Christ prayed to remain faithful workers—servants who would “continue to speak [God’s] word with all boldness” and perform signs and wonders in the name of Jesus. Like warriors, they strengthened each other for battle against the schemes of man by recounting who God is and what He had done in the past. They reminded each other of what they had witnessed (verses 27–28). Not one thing—not even the crucifixion of Christ—occurred outside the will of the Sovereign Lord! As they prayed together, the disciples worshiped the One who created the heavens and the earth and had the power to overcome any obstacle that lay in their path—including the religious leaders who sought to oppose them. The Lord heard and answered the prayer of these fellow workers, warriors, and worshipers. By His grace, and the power of His Spirit, they all walked away encouraged and confidently continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Questions to Consider:

When was the last time you lifted your voice to God with your brothers and sisters in Christ? How might praying with other believers encourage you or increase your faith?

Prayer Prompt:

- Praise God for how other believers help us grow in faith through prayer.

Day 14

Richland Creek's Corporate Prayer Meeting

Key Scripture: Acts 2:42-44- 42 "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common."

The past eight days we have focused on what corporate prayer is, the necessity for it, how we pray corporately, what we can learn from it, and specific examples from scripture. We have also studied the scripture passage above as it relates to the early church. Now that we understand what the passage meant to the early church, we can rightly apply it to our present-day life. We desire, through obedience, to follow that same model of corporate prayer in the early church here at Richland Creek.

God, in His grace, has allowed prayer to be something the family of believers participates in together when the church gathers. Keep in mind that this is something people are murdered for daily in many other parts of the world. What a true gift it is that we can come together as the body of Christ. May we not take it for granted.

Richland Creek gathers monthly, on the last Sunday night of each month, for a time of corporate prayer. We come together and spend time in prayer over various topics affecting our church and the world. We invite you to join us as we boldly proclaim the Word of God through corporate prayer.

Our Next Prayer Meeting: Sunday, September 26 at 6:00 pm

Questions to Consider:

Do you value our time of corporate prayer so much that it drives you to participate each month?

Do you take for granted our ability to come together in corporate prayer? Do you have a better understanding of the importance of corporate prayer?

Prayer Prompts:

- Father, we pray that our entire congregation would participate in our time of corporate prayer each month and that our faith would be deepened by doing so.
- May it be a sweet time of unity as a body as we communicate with you through prayer.

Day 15

What is Leadership?

Key Scripture: *John 13:13–15 "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you."*

The next few days will explore aspects of leadership, not by what the world says, but by what the Word says. The world twists leadership toward what the leader achieves then receives—more authority, higher status, more pay, nicer office, or better hours. Often at the expense of others, there's a supposed social ladder to climb and a focus on personal gain and position. The world exalts self (Luke 22:25–27).

In contrast, the Bible flips the script on leadership. Since the Word is our authority and Jesus our example in all things, the answer to, "What is leadership and what does it look like?" is clear. It's Jesus. He is our perfect Lord and Teacher; and He commands us to lead as He did – as a humble servant.

Yes, leadership also has influence, and leadership takes responsibility. However, leadership is service. Christian leaders are first obedient servants of Christ, men and women of Godly character. They then take the initiative to equip others for God's kingdom mission. They care more for people than their position. Leadership is an opportunity to practically love God and love others as disciples who develop disciples. The goal is God's glory through people's growth in Christ-likeness (Mark 10:42–45; Ephesians 4:1–13).

God uses leadership roles to shape believers through deepening relationship with Him and greater responsibility for others. Since God alone is worthy of their life, a leader holds to the Word, submits to the Spirit, and follows Jesus' example (Rom 12:1–13).

Questions to Consider:

Am I content to serve anywhere? Do I think of myself as blessed when I serve? (John 13:17) How have I, in pride, desired a position over humbly serving as Jesus did?

Prayer Prompts:

- Thank you for Christ's perfect example. I repent and turn from ways I am not selfless. Help me see leadership as an opportunity to serve other's good.
- Raise up leaders at the Creek who fear God, hold to biblical truth, and despise selfish gain (Exod 18:21).

Day 16

Servant Leadership: Jesus, Our Example

Key Scripture: *Matthew 20:28 "Even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

As Jesus spoke of the kingdom of heaven, two of His disciples saw an opportunity for rank and position and fought for a place of leadership in His Kingdom. Jesus used their misguided self-promotion as an opportunity to explain that His Kingdom was unlike any they had experienced. "You do not know what you are asking," Jesus explained (Matthew 20:22). Position wasn't Jesus' to give as even He came to do the Father's will; (John 6:38) not to be served but to serve. Those in this Kingdom were to follow His example. In the Kingdom of Heaven, the great would serve, and the first would be a slave.

Jesus led by example as he provided a front-row seat to servant leadership when He washed the feet of His disciples (John 13:1–17). Even as they personally experienced His service, they didn't fully understand that leadership in this Kingdom meant serving others. Peter pushed back as their leader Jesus, took off His cloak, donned a towel, and washed their feet. Washing His disciples' feet was nothing compared with the ultimate sacrifice to come.

That ultimate sacrifice came as Jesus humbled Himself to the point of death on a cross. Jesus, who was in the form of God, made Himself no reputation, took on the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man (Philippians 2:5–7). Jesus bore our sin, died as our substitute as He humbled Himself to give His life as a ransom for many. On the third day, He rose victoriously from the grave.

Throughout His life, Jesus endured suffering. "He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). A day is coming when at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Jesus, worthy of all power, wealth, wisdom, might, honor, glory, and blessing (Revelation 5:12–13), the very Son of God became the servant of God in order to do the mission of God.

Questions to Consider:

How do I orient my life to serve the Body of Christ? How do I serve my lost neighbors, coworkers, friends?

Prayer Prompts:

- Dear Father, thank you for the example Jesus modeled as a servant leader who gave His life as a ransom for many. Enable me to recognize areas where I may serve and be faithful in them. Help me be a living sacrifice in your Kingdom.

Day 17

Kingdom Leadership: Mission-focused, People-oriented

Key Scripture: *Matthew 4:19-20 And He (Jesus) said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him.*

An internet search of "leadership" generates more than three trillion results. As disciples of Christ, we look to Jesus as our model. "Leader" isn't the first title that comes to mind as a description of Jesus, but of the original twelve, eleven were faithful to His mission.

Hand-picked by Jesus, His disciples dropped their plans to focus on His mission. Men who would come to lead others as they proclaimed, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 10:7). Jesus' disciples were to preach the good news of the gospel of the Kingdom, God's restoration plan for mankind. Through repentance and belief in Christ's perfect life, atoning death, burial, and resurrection, sinners were reconciled to God. His followers became leaders and were given authority to continue the mission (Matt 28:18-20).

The mission for the first leaders wouldn't come with acclaim or rewards; but instead, following Jesus came at significant cost. He warned they would be sheep among wolves, beaten, dragged before rulers, face death, and hated for His name's sake (Matt 10:16-23). Kingdom leadership costs. There are no special perks or privileges. Jesus as our model said, "Even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28). Whoever would be great must be a servant and whoever would be first must be a slave (Matt 20:27). That message seems foreign to the world but should be a defining mark of a Christian.

Kingdom leaders orient their lives to help others know King Jesus and live in obedience to Him. We read where Paul orients his life towards people as he writes to those in Philippi explaining the church would benefit from his labor among them. While Paul suffered greatly for the gospel, he knew his continued labor on behalf of the church would be an advantage in their progress and joy in the faith. This would give them ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus (Phil 1:25-26). The biblical definition of Kingdom leadership seems foreign and is in sharp contrast to the three trillion internet results, yet it must be a mark of the Christian leader.

Questions to Consider:

Do I live my life with Kingdom focus? Am I people-oriented?

Prayer Prompts:

- Dear Heavenly Father, I confess I often think more about leading my own kingdom than yours. Enable me to live my life devoted to your Kingdom and serve others.

Day 18

Spiritual Maturity & Leadership

Key Scripture: *1 Corinthians 11:1 "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ."*

What is spiritual maturity? Spiritual maturity is to grow towards Christ-likeness. This requires obedience to Christ. Christ-likeness is our ultimate goal. When Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ," he is not asking anyone to imitate him to become a "Paul-follower." Paul was a sinner, just like us. Instead, he is always and ultimately pointing to Christ as the One to follow. As a spiritually mature believer and leader, Paul is saying, "I am imitating Christ. Do as I do."

"Be imitators" implies an ongoing command. We are to continually imitate Christ. We are to continually grow in our faith and knowledge of Jesus. As Jesus told us in Matthew 28:18-20 we are to make disciples of all nations and teach them all that Christ has commanded. We are to do this continually. We are all leaders of someone. Therefore, we cannot be hypocrites. We must be doing what we're asking others to do. Just like Paul, we need to say, "I am imitating Christ. Do as I do."

Spiritual maturity must be the foundation for any leader. It is imperative that we are spiritually mature and growing in our faith and understanding of Christ. Moreover, it is the job of the spiritually mature leader to help others grow in their faith and become imitators of Christ. How do we do that? Just like Paul, we should seek to imitate Jesus by loving God and loving others. Practicing our church discipleship goals will help continually shape and mature us into Christ-likeness. Need help? Check out our discipleship foundations classes on Wednesday nights. By God's grace and your obedience, you will grow in your spiritual maturity. Leaders especially must continually grow in their faith and knowledge of Christ. Finally, spiritual maturity should always be marked by humility. Christ is our ultimate model of spiritual maturity and humility. We should be able to say, "Imitate me, as I imitate Christ."

Questions to Consider:

What are you doing to continually grow your spiritual maturity? Are you asking others to imitate Christ while you are not obedient yourself?

Prayer Prompts:

- Read Colossians 1:28-29. God, help me to be obedient to your Word. Convict me of any lack of humility in my leadership. Help me, with the power of the Holy Spirit, to imitate You and to lead others to imitate You, as well.

Day 19

Competency vs. Character

Key Scripture: *Galatians 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."*

In leadership both character and competence matter. Which one matters more? Which one matters more to you? No one will deny we all want the job done and the mission accomplished. But should the desire for competency eclipse the desire for character?

Everyone loves a leader with charisma and competency. We long to be led by an accomplished, high-level leader. Success is thrilling. Yet, God unquestionably values character over competency. 1 Samuel 16:7 reads, "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.'" Godliness is a matter of character, not accomplishment. While people can surely grow and mature in their character, teaching skills and competence is much easier. A lack of character requires transformation, not just new information (Geiger).

What's the pitfall in competency and character? We mistake the operation of gifts in our lives for the operation of grace all too often. In other words, we can execute our giftings so brilliantly, all the while being void of a growing and thriving relationship with the Lord. Outwardly you can be an effective leader while inwardly having nothing there. The inner life is the area of spiritual fruit, the outer life is the area of spiritual gifts (Keller).

Jesus is our model of character, competence, and leadership. Men and women of character will lead like Jesus and put their confidence in God. Colossians 1:10, So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

Questions to Consider:

Do you esteem character or competency in yourself? In others? Why? Are you growing in your relationship with God this year? Do you look more like Christ today than six months ago?

Prayer Prompts:

- Father, help me walk in a manner worthy of Christ. Cultivate in me integrity, faithfulness and obedience to your Word that my leadership may be pleasing to You. Sanctify my character and lead me as I lead others.

Day 20

Raising up Leaders: From "Me" to "We"

Key Scripture: *Psalm 78:72 "So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, And guided them with his skillful hands."*

The "he" the psalmist speaks of in this verse is King David. David was a shepherd boy working in his father's fields- bearing a lot of responsibility to protect his family's flock. These responsibilities would serve as a training ground to one day become a King. God chose David to be His servant and shepherd the people of Israel as King- and David did so with integrity and skill.

In corporate America, one may strive to reach the pinnacle of positions- maybe a CEO of a company for example. Once a person achieves that level, they likely don't think "Let's see... who can I start raising up to replace me?" Of course not! On the contrary, they probably think "I've worked hard for this job and I hope I get to keep it for a very long time!" With biblical leadership, however, we must lead with a God-centered focused lens. We should always hold the mindset of working ourselves out of a job, remembering that leaders make leaders. From "me" to "we." There is great humility in recognizing we can't do something entirely on our own. Leaders have a great responsibility in raising up other leaders by first pursuing holiness through obedience themselves, then raising up others with that same blueprint. Leaders shepherd others, walking with them, teaching and training them, and eventually delegating responsibility to them. With delegation of responsibility comes trust and grace.

Jesus was the perfect model of biblical leadership. Jesus didn't hold his ministry to himself, but rather, He raised up others leaders. He walked closely with his disciples, He humbled Himself as a servant (Matthew 23:11-The greatest among you shall be your servant.), He taught them, He had fellowship with them and He prepared them for when He would no longer be physically present in his earthly ministry. Essentially, Jesus raised up other leaders to work himself out of his earthly job- knowing His earthly ministry would soon end.

The "we" mentality of servant leadership is beautifully driven by The Word- obeying the command from Paul to do nothing for selfish gain (Philippians 2:3-4.)

Questions to Consider: Can you think of a servant leader who imitates Christ in the ways described above? How does having a better understanding of biblical leadership reorient your thinking?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for leaders to be defined by the Word and not the world- that they will pursue holiness, fear God and hold to biblical truth. Pray for humility and a "we" mentality for biblical leaders as they look to Jesus as their ultimate and perfect example.

Day 21

So, You Want to Be a Leader?

Key Scripture: *1 John 3:18 "Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."*

Loving beyond words, with actions and in truth, is hard. Actually, without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, it's impossible. The truth of God's Word teaches that true Christians turn from selfish desires, and honor others as we follow Jesus' pattern of servant leadership (Rom 12:9–13; Eph 5:1–2).

If someone desires to be a servant leader, where does one start? A leader is first a growing follower of Christ who serves. To facilitate growth, Richland Creek Community Church encourages every person to be in a discipleship relationship with a mature Christian who partners with them in each of our goal areas.

(For details, visit richlandcreek.com/connect/discipleship/)

One of our discipleship goals is to love others through our ministry, to actively love by serving. God has gifted each Christian to serve the local church family. Not sure where to serve? Try volunteering in a ministry—any church ministry. If that's not the right fit, try another ministry until you find where you can use your spiritual gift to serve the body (1 Cor 12:7; Eph 4:12).

Serving through church ministry has a funny way of shaping us more than expected. God uses ministry to conform us into the image of Christ by revealing sin and growing humility, self-control, kindness, gentleness, and joy. Ministry drives us to acknowledge our dependence on God; everything we are and have is by His grace. Our goal is not to please people or receive position, but to bring God glory as His servant on His kingdom mission, as a disciple who makes disciples within church ministry (John 3:27; Gal 1:10 and 5:22–26).

Questions to Consider:

How am I or will I serve the Creek family this fall? How have I seen ministry as simply a task instead of a place God changes me and equips others?

Prayer Prompts:

- Father, search my heart and reveal areas of selfishness I need to confess and turn from. Prepare my heart to serve Your way (Psalm 139:23–24).
- May You increase and I decrease. Use ministry to transform me and the whole Creek family into the image of Your Son (John 3:30).
- Remind me that I serve by Your grace and strength, and for Your glory. Use ministry to grow my love for others (1 Peter 4:7–11).

Day 22

Leadership Pipelines: Menus and Maps

Key Scripture: *Hebrews 13:7 "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith."*

What is the mission of God? To worship and glorify God in all that we do—individually and corporately. God sets the mission. We (the church) carry out the mission. Quite simply, the assembling of God's children in local churches (to accomplish the mission) necessitates leaders. To be sure, leadership and leadership development are not our final goals—they are how we (as a body of Christ) can bring glory to God.

Strange as it may sound, many churches have no strategy to help members grow in their spiritual maturity (Christ-likeness)—an essential qualification for leadership. Leadership positions are often granted based on faithful attendance more than spiritual maturity. "Often churches merely exist to keep running their programs and services. They are not developing leaders intentionally and consistently. When leaders do emerge from some churches, it's often by accident" (Geiger & Peck). This is the menu approach: members are presented with classes, events, and functions for the express purpose of offering what they want, not what they need. No more menus!

So, what's a pipeline? Think of this as a pathway—a sequential path of steps that lead people from one place to another. Our starting point is discipleship. Here we learn what it means to grow in Christ-likeness—what does it mean to be an obedient follower of Christ? From there, our pathway contains all the necessary training and development steps for one to serve and/or lead, steps that purposefully and strategically lead to a desired destination. Think of this pipeline like a map. We are shepherding members from destination A to destination B. A pipeline would help leaders lead themselves, lead others, lead leaders, and/or lead ministries in its simplest form.

But remember, leaders aren't immortal. Life changes, things happen, and leaders move on. We need to invest and cultivate leaders continually. If we don't invest in leadership development today, there won't be any leaders tomorrow. We must be about the business of planning for not only our spiritual legacy but leadership legacy as well. Think Moses and Joshua. To this end, the Creek is actively building leadership and ministry pathways that will develop and deploy leaders for all kinds of service and ministry.

Questions to Consider: Are you growing in Christ-likeness? This is the first step towards serving and leading. Will you begin that path of spiritual readiness through the Creek's discipleship opportunities?

Prayer Prompts: Father, thank you for a church that values its members growth and development. Make me useful to you, Lord; create in me an obedient heart.

Day 23

Leadership Standards: The Hill To Die On

Key Scripture: *Luke 6:39–40* He also told them a parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.”

By now, it should be clear: leadership is vital and carries a high degree of responsibility. Every church must have some mechanism in place for leadership development. A pathway of leadership development will not only help cultivate more leaders, but it will also ensure leaders meet a standard of qualification before they are tasked with the enormous responsibility of leading fellow believers.

Standards of leadership start with spiritual maturity. What is spiritual maturity? Obedience to the Word of God. “Maturity is about how you live your life. Biblical maturity is never just about what you know but always about how grace has employed what you have come to know to transform the way you live” (Paul Tripp).

Unfortunately, many churches today tend to assess the wrong metrics for spiritual maturity. Evidently, the gold standard for measuring spiritual growth in churches is attendance. After a few years of attending services, groups, and classes, many members are labeled mature, seasoned Christians. This is called “assumption.” Assumptions destroy discipleship and lead to poor decisions and outcomes. The antidote to assumptions is assessment. Rightly so, Dr. Ewart championed the practice of assessment the entire year he served us. Without assessment, how are we ever to know who is spiritually mature, who is qualified for leadership, and if our ministry efforts are effective? Standards + assessment = mission momentum.

We need standards. This really is a hill to die on. Why? Because whatever the leaders are, the people become (Luke 6:40). Lower the bar on biblical leadership, and the entire congregation will be affected—adversely.

So, what is a standard? An average or normal requirement, quality, quantity, level, or grade. Something considered (by an authority or by general consent) as a basis of comparison; an approved model. Standards are immensely important for clarity—clarity of expectation and mutual understanding about various levels of leadership here at the Creek.

Questions to Consider: What assumptions have you made about your qualifications for service or leadership? Has your life been transformed by the gospel and your obedience to God’s Word?

Prayer Prompts: Father, create in me a humble heart that is teachable, faithful and willing to grow in spiritual maturity. Show me where I lack obedience to your Word and help me yield my life to your commands.

Day 24

Levels of Leadership at the Creek: Be, Know, & Do

Key Scripture: *Hebrews 13:17 "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you."*

In the last two days, we have considered some essential aspects of leadership: pipelines and standards. Today we will consider leadership at Richland Creek Community Church. Specifically, we will look at Richland Creek's levels of leadership. Our elder body has identified five levels of leadership: volunteer, servant, coach, coordinator, and elder/pastor.

The pastors have labored tirelessly over the last year and a half to lead our congregation to be healthier and mission-minded. Part of this labor involves the leadership of our church. A church of our size cannot do the work of ministry without its members serving as leaders. As the pastors developed these levels, familiar questions had to be answered: who do our leaders need to be? What do they need to know? What do they need to do? At each and every level, these questions are addressed.

As we will see, each level has specific standards identified to transparently communicate the expectations required. All levels of leadership involve being a disciple that makes disciples. "Leadership development divorced from discipleship separates development from the Great Commission. As people are being discipled, they must be challenged to influence others. And as leaders are being developed, they must be continually discipled" (Geiger).

For the next five days, we will explore what each level looks like and how all those serving in these levels collaboratively work together to fulfill the mission of God. Every level is important. Every level is crucial to mission accomplishment.

Questions to Consider:

Are you a disciple that makes disciples? This is the foundational requirement for leadership at our church? What do you need to do to qualify for serving as leader?

Prayer Prompts:

- Father, thank you for a church that holds leadership qualifications and development so seriously. I pray for continued wisdom and discernment for our elder body as they continue to train and deploy leaders throughout the Creek.

Day 25

What is a Volunteer?

Key Scripture: *Psalm 100:2* “Serve the Lord with gladness.”

Once we are saved by grace through faith and have been baptized, our next step in being a committed follower of Christ should be to serve within the local church. At Richland Creek, we have multiple opportunities to fulfill God's call to be on mission with Him.

Before stepping into a volunteer position at the Creek, it's important that you know what our mission, vision, and strategy plan is, that you attend worship consistently, that you are connected to a Life Group, and that you commit to growing in the Core Competencies or Spiritual Disciplines our leaders have set before us. As we gain personal growth in all of these areas, we'll be able to minister to others with greater effectiveness.

Volunteering our time is undoubtedly a great way to serve the Lord with gladness at Richland Creek Community Church. We can demonstrate our love for God by loving and helping others. The only way for us to be fruitful volunteers is to lay aside our own desires in order to love, serve, and obey the will of God. We must die daily to sin and fleshly desires so that Christ's life can flow through us.

We are so grateful for those who volunteer their time each week at Richland Creek. To find out what volunteer positions are available or for more information on volunteering, please see one of our pastors or ministry leaders or call the church office.

Questions to Consider:

Are you fulfilling God's call to be on mission with Him by volunteering your time and talents at Richland Creek? If you are already volunteering in a specific area, are you doing it with gladness?

Prayer Prompts:

- Thank God for those who volunteer at Richland Creek. It takes everyone partnering together to serve our church.
- If you are not volunteering, pray that God would give you a heart for serving Him within the church body.
- Pray that we would be a church that loves God and loves others.

Day 26

Level of Leadership: Servant

Key Scripture: *1 Peter 2:21 "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps."*

The servant level encompasses all the standards in the previous level (volunteer). Furthermore, all levels of leadership interact with the Creek's mission, vision and strategy in some way. The servant level lives Creek mission, vision and strategy. Also, the key adjustment (specific to this level) is learning to see discipleship as a calling to help others grow as well. Discipleship is a call, a vocation, to follow Jesus everywhere, before everyone, at every time (VanHoozer).

Building upon this, the servant leader has an established plan to practice the core competencies. This is such a practical yet helpful step in carrying out spiritual disciplines. Ideas don't become actions until you put plans into place. Moreover, the servant leader will demonstrate good judgment and decision-making. Prior experience gained in the volunteer level will be useful. To be sure, each leadership level brings greater responsibilities and diverse experiences that will grow the leader's skill set in this area.

This servant leader will also desire to replicate discipleship in other members. As mentioned earlier, all levels of leadership involve being a disciple that makes disciples. Consequently, this leader will want to help others become a disciple and/or mature others in their own walk with Christ.

An essential practice in a leader's life is accountability to a specific partner/circle for practicing core competencies. Dr. Lawless rightly informs us that accountability is "biblical. It is through iron sharpening iron that we grow (Prov. 27:17). We are to challenge each other to live in godliness (Heb. 3:12-13), confronting one another when necessary (Matt. 18:15-17; Luke 17:3).

Lastly, this servant-leader will have a basic understanding of Christian doctrine. What do believers need to know to be a disciple, make disciples, and lead others? Doctrine—the teachings of the Christian faith. The Bible is a book, filled with doctrine, that defines what is good, right and true. A loving Creator gave it to his dependent creatures so they would know how to properly make sense out of life (Tripp).

Questions To Consider: Do you have a plan for practicing the eight discipleship goals Richland Creek has affirmed? Do you see your discipleship as a calling to follow Jesus?

Prayer Prompt: Father, thank you for a church that desires to see its members be followers of Christ. Show me where I am failing to obey you and create a desire not to obey you but also to be accountable to others for my own spiritual growth

Day 27

Level of Leadership: Coach

Key Scripture: *Colossians 4:6 "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person."*

This level encompasses all the standards in the previous level (volunteer & servant). As mentioned in previous days this month, all levels of leadership interact with the Creek's mission, vision, and strategy in some way. The coaching level of leadership leads into the Creek's mission, vision, and strategy. And the key adjustment (specific to this level) is learning to communicate up and down the leadership ladder as well as communicating across to the body with the Creek's mission, vision and strategy to others.

Building upon this, the coach leader can gather and influence people. Indeed, influencing others is at the core of what it means to lead. At this level, influence is a key skill used to grow others in spiritual maturity. Rightly leveraged the "coach" will lead others into accountability—discipling future disciple-makers. It bears repeating: every level of leadership involves being a disciple that makes disciples.

Other skills and expectations in this level of leadership include effective delegation and resolving conflict. To be sure, good communication skills, "being present" amidst your team, and active listening (James 1:19-20) will help with conflict resolution. This level of leadership also seeks to measure the effectiveness of one's leadership and identify other leaders and invest in their development. Creating a culture of leadership development must be on one's radar continually.

Finally, a strong grasp of doctrine is expected with this level. As a reminder, doctrine is the way the central themes of God's revelation in Scripture are summarized and taught. Doctrine underlies and, indeed, explains the practice of Christian faith. It is the Bible's truth that sustains, strengthens, and guides us (Challies).

Questions to Consider:

Are you growing in your understanding of Christian doctrine? Do you desire to lead at the Creek? What can you do to prepare for future leadership?

Prayer Prompts:

- Father, I pray for all those in leadership at the Creek that they would have sound doctrine, growing knowledge of you and wisdom in all their responsibilities. Thank you for all those in leadership. Thank you for what you are accomplishing through them for your glory and kingdom to come.

Day 28

Level of Leadership: Coordinator

Key Scripture: *Proverbs 19:21 "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand."*

This level of leadership encompasses all the standards in the previous levels (volunteer, servant, and coach). As mentioned previously, all levels of leadership interact with the Creek's mission, vision and strategy in some way. The coordinator level of leadership is loyal to Creek mission, vision and strategy. And the key adjustment (specific to this level) is becoming strategic in our implementation. Strategy by definition is developing a plan to achieve a certain goal or vision. Strategic leadership is future-focused.

Future-focused means this leader will have a long-term perspective. This leader has demonstrated a continuing desire to lead in the mission of Richland Creek and has strategy-level thinking in ministry. Think Nehemiah, King David, and Paul. These men are excellent examples of those who strategized in their ministry plans and devoted themselves to the mission of God.

Additionally, the coordinator must be a team player in meetings and in public. Paul's words are essential here in how we collaborate with each other, "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others" (Phil 2:3-4). Likewise, in working with and for others, there must be a strong awareness of "fit" among servants and leaders. You must know the strengths and weaknesses of your fellow servants & leaders—leveraging their strengths and strengthening their weaknesses.

As with all other levels of leadership, discipleship and discipling are expected. Therefore, at this level, high accountability is expected for not only practicing core competencies but replicating discipleship in others. Discipling is deliberately doing spiritual good to someone so that he or she will be more like Christ. Discipleship is the term I use to describe our own following Christ. Discipling is the subset of that, which is helping someone else follow Christ (Dever).

Finally, a thorough command of doctrine is expected.

Questions to Consider: Do you desire to invest in the goals and mission of Richland Creek? Are you willing to invest in others by making more disciples?

Prayer Prompts: Father, I pray our leaders would be steadfast in their service. Guard them against distraction and discouragement. Help them lead with humility, gentleness, and patience as they lead others in the church's mission. Grant them grace to be men and women above reproach, not self-willed, and not quick-tempered.

Day 29

Level of Leadership: Pastor/Elder

Key Scripture: *1 Peter 5:1-3* “Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.”

Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gives elders three things that elders are NOT to be motivated by in pastoral ministry.

These three motivators are traps that all elders could fall into and be disqualified from pastoral ministry. Elders must desire to devote themselves to ministry motivated by the gospel of our Lord Jesus and our love to God knowing He loved us first. It is the love of God and the love of others that drives the elder to do the difficult work of pastoral ministry.

The first false motivation found in verse 2 is that of “I have to”—ministering because it is your job; not with joy and great expectation of what the Lord will do. Ministering out of compulsion often has “paying the bills” in view. This pastor has lost his first love and will compromise God’s word in order to just do the minimum of work so he can go do other things he desires more.

The second false motivation in verse 2 is greed. The elder who is motivated by greed will cease caring for people (whom Christ died for) and begin to view them as a commodity. To that elder, people are ‘giving units’ that support the church budget or elder salaries rather than to evangelize the lost, disciple believers, and care for the saints.

The third motivation that Peter warns us about is found in verse 3—pride; pride that turns a servant leader into a small dictator. When an elder is pride-driven instead of biblically driven, he desires to be the person in charge of every detail and refuses to accept criticism and accountability. This pastor can do great damage to the flock as it may seem he loves them dearly but, in reality, only loves himself.

Elders are to be examples of all things in obedience with God’s Word. The motivation of the elder is loving God with all their being and loving those for whom Christ died—that God may be praised and glorified in all things.

Questions to Consider: Do you spend dedicated time in prayer routinely for your elders?

Prayer Prompts: Pray that the elders have the right heart posture for pastoral ministry. Pray for a hedge of protection that they will not succumb to pride and greed. Pray they will walk in humble obedience.

Day 30

Women in Leadership

Key Scripture: *1 Corinthians 11:3- 3 "But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God."*

Read Genesis 2:21-24. The word "complementarity" doesn't appear in the Bible, but is used by people to summarize a biblical concept. It's like the word "Trinity." The Bible never uses the word "Trinity," but it undeniably points to a triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Complementarity is the Biblical concept that men and women are created equal but have different roles which complement each other in the leadership in the home and in the church.

Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and women, such that marriage ultimately serves as a type of union between Christ and his church. (Genesis 2:21-24; Romans 1:26-28)

In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to serve God in the fullness of the gifting of the Holy Spirit. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles both in the home and in the church which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church. In the home, the husband exercises headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submits to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord. (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:22-33) In the church, both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God. God has ordained different ministry roles for men and women in the church and, as in the home, these roles are equal (1 Corinthians 12) but different. As an example, the Pastor/Elder role within the church is given to qualified men only and this is grounded in creation, the fall, and Christ's redemption. (1 Timothy 2:12-14)

We must be wise as serpents in listening to what the world says about these roles as there are many false teachings. Holding to the standard and truth of scripture will foster a biblical understanding of God's purpose and design of these roles.

Questions to Consider: Study all of the verses listed above. How does this shape your thinking and understanding of men's and women's roles?

Prayer Prompts: Pray for a biblical understanding of the roles of men and women. Thank you God, that in your love and goodness, you created everyone in your image and gave us roles that are equal but different.

Thank You

We praise the Lord for all those who contributed to make this prayer guide possible. We are so grateful for the faithful servants who have dedicated their time and talents to writing this prayer guide.

To God Be the Glory!

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1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

But we ask you, brothers and sisters, to recognize those who diligently labor among you and are in leadership over you in the Lord, and give you instruction, and that you regard them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.