

The Virtue Project

Cultivating the Influence of Lives Well Lived

An initiative of Cornerstone's Institute of Christianity and Cultural Engagement



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Prologue: The Power of a Life Well-Lived

"...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

A wise Christian once remarked, "*Preach the gospel at all times. Use words if necessary.*" That simple admonition captures an important aspect of our calling as cultural influencers. To followers called to bring the transforming power of the gospel to bear on their world Jesus said, "You are the light of the world...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:14-16). This commission of Christ underscores the reality that who we are and how we live is often the first step in capturing the attention of those who are less than interested in what we have to say. It reminds us that our character and our actions are critically important in validating our words as we bring the transforming power of the gospel to the world. The familiar grade school exercise of "show and tell" is an instructive metaphor for those of us who believe that *showing* the difference that Jesus has made in our lives sets the stage for us to influence the culture and ultimately *tell* others about the abundant life that Jesus offers to those who come to Him. In other words, when it comes to influencing cultures for Christ, character counts, and actions matter.

So, at Cornerstone University we take seriously the opportunity to provide a Christ-centered educational environment that not only focuses on intellectual and professional preparedness but that also welcomes our students into a community that expresses the virtues of the Kingdom of Christ that will enable them to live lives of influence in their world for Christ.

Hence, *The Virtue Project* articulates nine key virtues that reflect the culture-shaping perspectives and practices of Kingdom citizens. These virtues are reinforced throughout the Cornerstone experience in ways that will encourage students to incorporate these hallmarks of the Kingdom into the core of their being. That, in turn, will enable them flourish as followers of Christ and as visible citizens of His Kingdom to a watching world.

The influential power of a life well lived was evident when Mother Teresa was the featured speaker at The National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C. Small of stature and unassuming, she was less than compelling as a symbol of power. Barely able to see over the podium, with a depth of conviction she eloquently defended the sanctity of life, stating that "*Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love, but to use any violence to get what they want.*" But her words were more than indictments. They were a plea for Christ-like action:

Please don't kill the child. I want the child. Please give me the child. I am willing to accept any child who would be aborted and to give that child to a married couple who will love the child and be loved by the child.¹

As the applauding crowd stood in an extended ovation, her prophetic clarity no doubt created an awkward moment for President Clinton who was seated next to her on the platform. When questioned by a reporter about her speech, Clinton, who was an outspoken advocate of abortion rights, responded by saying "*It's hard to argue with a life that is so well lived.*"

In a world that is often at odds with the values of the Kingdom, we intend to graduate students who will winsomely reflect the virtues of Kingdom citizenship so that it might be said of them as well: "*It's hard to argue with lives that are so well-lived.*" And, whether through prophetic proclamation or through culture-shaping activities, lives well lived will open doors for our graduates to speak Christ into their cultures and to offer the redemptive qualities righteousness, peace and joy as an expression of the gospel in its fullest sense. (Rom. 14:17-18)

President Joe Stowell

¹Mother Teresa, "Mother Teresa Goes to Washington." *National Prayer Breakfast*, Washington, D.C., (February 5, 1994). <http://catholiceducation.org/articles/abortion/ab0039.html>

Overview

Cornerstone University exists to produce graduates who influence the cultures of our world for Christ and his Kingdom. This means that in both our community and in the actions of our graduates, we seek to embody the values of the coming Kingdom that Christ will establish on earth. Indeed, our primary means of influencing society is not as “culture warriors” but rather as humble, faithful Christ-followers who live with integrity as citizens of the future Kingdom.

We are committed, therefore, to producing students who are not only intellectually and professionally prepared but whose lives demonstrate the distinguishing characteristics of the Kingdom—the Christian virtues—and hence who will influence culture through their virtuous lives. This commitment manifests itself not in one particular course or student activity but rather a comprehensive and collaborative project that, when brought to fruition, will infuse every aspect of the university. To give structure to this comprehensive task of Christian formation, we have specified nine key virtues that will be woven into the university’s courses, programs, activities, and community life.

These virtues are...

Gratitude: *A Grateful Spirit that...*

- 1) Responds to our deep indebtedness to Christ for his redemptive work on our unworthy behalf by living with a thankful spirit that expresses itself in a willingness to serve him and surrender to his will.
- 2) Recognizes God’s sovereign oversight of all the details of life which enables us to give thanks in everything for His ability to bring ultimate good from trouble and suffering.
- 3) Recognizes the blessings that others bring to our lives and regularly expresses gratefulness for their contributions to our growth and success.

Hospitality: *A Hospitable Spirit that...*

- 1) Affirms the value of others by a willingness to welcome their thoughts and perspectives without defensiveness or an argumentative spirit.
- 2) Seeks to welcome others into our sphere of influence regardless of race, gender, class or culture and to bless them as friends without regard to return or reward.
- 3) Considers the resources of our lives (time, attention, money, etc.) as God-given means to meet the needs of others even when it may involve sacrifice of our own interests or possessions.

Self-discipline: *A Life that is governed by the Spirit...*

- 1) By completely surrendering to his control of my thoughts, actions and attitudes as an act of worship.
- 2) By relinquishing personal freedoms for the sake of others and the flourishing of community.
- 3) By cultivating habits that advance the Kingdom values of righteousness, peace and joy.

Faith: *A Faith that...*

- 1) Chooses to believe and trust in God, his Word and his ways in all circumstances of life.
- 2) Nurtures firm biblical convictions that drive and define actions and attitudes.
- 3) Produces good works that demonstrate the depth and sincerity of our faith.

Hope: *A Hope that...*

- 1) Places unwavering confidence in the character of God and the promises of his Word.
- 2) Finds strength and encouragement in seasons of trial because of the ultimate work of Christ to shape and form us into his likeness through suffering.
- 3) Rejoices in the coming of Christ when the disappointments and injustices of this world will be made right and we will be welcomed into the joy of his presence forever.

Love: *A Love that...*

- 1) Grows out of God's unconditional love toward us, which prompts us to live out the two great commandments to love God wholeheartedly and to love others as we love ourselves.
- 2) Models God's love for us by liberally showing his compassion, kindness and forgiveness to others even when it is not deserved.
- 3) Compels us to proclaim the life transforming power of the Gospel in loving and winsome ways for his glory and his Kingdom.

Wisdom: *A Wisdom that...*

- 1) Delights in the pursuit of knowing and living out the principles and practices of Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom."
- 2) Rightly discerns the truths and falsehoods of the world and pursues knowledge under the lordship of Christ.
- 3) Confidently proclaims the truth of Christ's work on the cross, recognizing that the wisdom of God often appears as foolishness to the world.

Courage: *A Courage that...*

- 1) Gives strength to trust in God's abiding presence and power even in the midst of adversity.
- 2) Leads us to stand firm in our convictions during times of persecution, choosing to fear God rather than people as we boldly live out and proclaim the Gospel in our lives and our community.
- 3) Encourages one another with the promise of Christ's return and his ultimate victory over sin, death and the forces of this world.

Justice: *A Justice that...*

- 1) Turns our attention and resources to the needs of the marginalized and oppressed.
- 2) Seeks to right what is wrong and unjust in the peaceful name of Christ.
- 3) Compels us to serve as agents of God's *shalom* to the personal and systemic chaos of our world as an expression of our longing for the fulfillment of the ultimate promises for Christ's just reign.

As members of a Christ-centered university, we are committed to making these virtues central to our individual and communal lives. Because students are the center of the university's mission, however, we will frame the virtues in three stages that mark the seasons of life for the typical undergraduate student. The first three virtues—gratitude, hospitality, and self-discipline—are "invitational" in nature and will be emphasized for first-year students entering the community.

The second triad of virtues—faith, hope, and love—are foundational to a season of living in community and particularly pertinent during a student's second and third years at Cornerstone. And while all the virtues

contribute to cultural influence, the third group of virtues—wisdom, courage, and justice—gain prominence and pertinence as students prepare to move out from community to impact culture. These “extending” virtues in particular serve to advance Cornerstone’s commitment to prepare students for ongoing lives of Christ-like cultural influence.

Finally, these nine virtues are reinforced and stamped by the “governing” virtues of humility and integrity, which, of all the virtues, are the most distinctively Christian. As N. T. Wright observes, whereas virtue in classical times resulted in self-glorification, the core virtue exemplified by Christ was humility. Virtue, in Christ’s Kingdom, does not create heroes; it cultivates servants. Therefore, we will seek to augment each of the nine virtues with the governing virtues of *humility*—which deepens our sense of gratitude, motivates us to love sacrificially, and enables us to avoid self-righteousness in the pursuit of justice—and *integrity*, which guides us toward living in a manner that is consistent with what we claim to be.

Humility:

- 1) Exercise the virtues out of a humble awareness of our brokenness and our need to rely on the Holy Spirit to actualize virtue in our lives and relationships.
- 2) Embrace the virtues as a reflection of our humble surrender to the will of the Father in order that we may glorify him and not ourselves.
- 3) Express the virtues from a willingness to humbly see ourselves as servants of God and others.

Integrity:

- 1) Be true to our calling as citizens of the Kingdom to reflect the virtues and values of the Kingdom.
- 2) Be true to our righteousness in Christ by hungering to do what is right.
- 3) Be true to our brokenness by admitting our proneness to failure and self-direction.

The Counter-Cultural Nature of Virtuous Living

We believe that our influence will be empowered by our uniqueness in Christ and not in our sameness to the culture.

Kingdom Characteristic	Kingdom Virtue	Cultural Norm
Confession	Gratitude	Entitlement
Consideration	Hospitality	Isolation and Insensitivity
Consistency	Self-Discipline	Living by Impulse and Instinct
Conviction	Faith	Cynicism and Disbelief
Confidence	Hope	Pessimism and Despair
Compassion	Love	Self-Centeredness
Clarity	Wisdom	Foolishness
Commitment	Courage	Fear and Insecurity
Concern	Justice	Injustice

In conclusion, it must be emphasized that the Virtue Project is not another university program or regimen to accomplish. Rather, it suffuses our existing programs and helps to direct our various activities with coherence and intentionality toward the cultivation of Christian virtues in the enabling power of the Spirit.

For example...

- Academic courses will highlight certain virtues according to their particular content, such as Philosophy cultivating the virtue of wisdom; Wellness exemplifying the virtue of self-discipline; Christian Theology developing the virtue of faith.
- University chapels will emphasize a particular virtue each semester.
- Study Abroad programs will incorporate the virtues by forcing students to ask questions such as, “What would love and justice look like in this social setting and amid these cultural challenges?”
- Athletic programs will incorporate virtues such as humility and courage into their mentorship programs.
- Student Development will frame lifestyle expectations not in terms of rules to obey but rather virtues to cultivate and reflect in students’ lives.
- Students will have opportunities to express the virtue concepts creatively in art, poetry, song, and drama.
- Stories of Christ’s followers who exemplify the virtues will be featured as a means of instructing and inspiring others to live out Kingdom virtues.
- Discipleship programs will be developed to equip students with a biblical foundation for Kingdom virtues.
- Visual iconography for each of the virtues will be created and displayed throughout the campus.
- Seminars and workshops will feature speakers and leaders who model virtue in the culture.

In sum, as our community learns to cultivate the virtues in a spirit of Christ-like humility, we will in turn produce graduates who influence culture and whose lives truly matter for the Kingdom.

The Virtue Project

An In-Depth Description



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Introduction

“We live *into* the stories we’ve absorbed; we become characters in the drama that has captivated us.”

(James K.A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 2013, p. 63)

Everyone has a life story that not only reflects their past but that also forms the dynamics and direction of their present and future. Devoted followers of Christ are captivated by His Kingdom and live into its story as a defining force for life. The Kingdom of Christ, as prophesied in the Old Testament, was inaugurated in the fullness of time with the advent of our King and Messiah, Jesus Christ (Gal. 4:4-5), who has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of God’s beloved Son (Col. 1:13-14). As new creations, we are invited to participate in God’s Kingdom work of redemption; renewing and restoring his creation to the beauty and glory which was originally intended for it. (2 Cor. 5:16-21).

As an educational community of Christ-followers, Cornerstone University finds its appropriate place within the larger Kingdom story. Our mission is to prepare students for cultural influence through the transforming power of the gospel – a Kingdom mandate. Our Educational Goals, curriculum, and co-curriculum all seek to instill competencies in students that will enable them to influence their cultures for Christ. To accomplish that task, however, we must consider not only what students will be able to do (competencies), but who they will *be* (character). This endeavor is well articulated by theologian, N.T. Wright, in his book, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* (2010):

What is the path to God’s new age, to the new time when God’s kingdom will flood the world with justice and peace? How are we to be the sort of people who not only inherit that world but actually join in right now to help make it happen?

Given our cultural climate, this does not promise to be an easy task. Christian Smith (2005, 2009) has well-documented the generational perspective on God and spirituality that is best described in his terms as “Moral Therapeutic Deism.” By that he means that God is an important yet distant entity who is largely irrelevant to the details of life except in times of need. A recent long-term study on student spirituality and higher education indicates that while students are interested in vague spirituality and a quest for meaning, that interest does not often translate into a desire for moral behavior or life change. Rather, sociologists have recently documented the emptiness of both alcohol abuse (Vander Ven, 2011) and unhealthy sexual practices (Freitas, 2008) that often mark a student’s pursuit of meaning on many American college campuses.

With this in mind, we have been considering the ways in which our university community can more intentionally cultivate Kingdom virtue in the lives of its members – not only students, but faculty and staff as well. As discussed by James K.A. Smith, the Christian university offers a venue for its community members to practice virtuous habits that will, in turn, shape their thinking (2013) and subsequently their actions. These habits both inform and are informed by a more holistic biblical picture of reality – a compelling story that conscripts our imaginations as well as our intellect. As Christians practice the virtues, they reflect the reality of the Kingdom and essentially depict what life in the Kingdom looks like.

For Christ-followers, a virtuous life is not another spiritual project but a natural outgrowth of our desire to live as Kingdom citizens reflecting the unique nature of our King. As such, virtuous living satisfies our deepest spiritual longings and gives meaning to our lives as we await the eternal fulfillment of the Kingdom when His virtues will reign in an environment marked by the blessings of righteousness, peace and joy.

Virtues and the Individual – Humility & Integrity

We have been assisted in this process by considering the role of specific virtues in the life of a Christ-follower. The cultivation of virtue is not a new concept. The writings of Aristotle, for example, point to specific virtues as markers of growth and as the foundation of ethical thought and behavior. Ancient philosophers glorified virtues such as courage, temperance, and prudence – traits that marked their heroes. However, as Wright points out, the advent of Christ brought both a new understanding and a new model of virtue into the scene. Whereas the virtue of ancient heroes drew attention to themselves, the core virtue exemplified by Christ was humility. Virtue, in Christ's kingdom, does not create heroes. It cultivates servants (Wright, 2010).

As the virtues have been considered, attention has been given to the ways in which humility and integrity serve as overarching virtues, undergirding and informing each individual virtue. Gratitude, for example, is only appropriately understood from the vantage point of humility. It is when we humbly admit our own brokenness and our deep need for God's grace and the undeserving benevolence of others that we are grateful for their contribution to our lives. The virtue of love, as another example, is informed by our capacity to, in humility, consider others before ourselves. Our diligent pursuit of wisdom is appropriately undertaken only when we are humbled by reverent fear of God. And, integrity empowers us to consistently live out our identity as Kingdom citizens.

We recognize as well that while humility and integrity are the overarching virtues, pride and inconsistency are the anti-virtues that distort virtue and defeat the ultimate effectiveness of a virtuous life. As the virtues are embraced and expressed through our lives, humility guards us against thinking highly of ourselves. It serves as a reminder that we are fallen vessels for His glory and that virtuous living is a result of the work of the indwelling Spirit in us and through us. Ultimately, every expression of virtue is ultimately a reflection of Jesus advancing his fame – not our own. And integrity reminds us to consistently live as citizens of the Kingdom.

Virtues and the University - Community

Central to this exploration of the virtues will be the concept of the community, establishing the shared nature and responsibility of pursuing the virtues. This is not an educational program assigned to Cornerstone's students and monitored by the faculty and staff. This is a shared commitment – a calling that draws the various members of the community together for the common purpose of pursuing Christlikeness through the practice of the virtues.

Because students are the center of the university's mission, however, we are framing the virtues in three stages that mark the seasons of life for the typical Cornerstone student. The first three virtues – gratitude, hospitality, and self-discipline – are invitational in nature and will be emphasized for first-year students entering the community.

The second triad of virtues – faith, hope, and love – are foundational to a season of living in community and are particularly pertinent during a student's second and third years at Cornerstone.

While all the virtues effectually contribute to cultural influence, as students prepare to move out from the community to impact culture, a third group of virtues – wisdom, courage, and justice – gain prominence and pertinence. These extending virtues serve, in particular, to advance Cornerstone's commitment to prepare students for lives of Christ-like cultural influence.

Virtue and the Kingdom - Influence

Our commitment as a university is to foster the kind of community that would more accurately represent Christ and His Kingdom, while intentionally engaging students in the process of becoming representatives of Christ and His Kingdom as they move out from Cornerstone to influence culture. The virtues emphasized, then, will not only directly impact the character of our community, they will prepare students for the next chapter in their lives.

The calling to cultural influence includes living as a “faithful presence” for the Kingdom in our communities (Hunter, 2010). It also includes the opportunity to be creators of culture as reflective of our infinitely creative God (Crouch, 2008). Ultimately, cultural influence involves the winsome proclamation of the Gospel (Root and Guthrie, 2011). Attention to each of these virtues will ensure that both the means and the motivation for cultural influence will be reflective of the heart of Christ.

The Invitational Virtues	The Foundational Virtues	The Extending Virtues
Gratitude	Faith	Wisdom
Hospitality	Hope	Courage
Self-discipline	Love	Justice

Summary

This document will:

- Clarify and communicate our understanding of each of these virtues,
- Outline the scriptural bases for the virtues with a particular emphasis on the example and teaching of Jesus Christ,
- Identify the implications of each virtue for our campus atmosphere, both at the individual and the communal level, and
- Propose application of the virtues as a means of extending Christ’s Kingdom – our goal of cultural influence.

The “Virtue Project” articulated here is not another university program or regimen to accomplish. Rather, it suffuses our existing programs and helps to direct our various activities with coherence and intentionality toward the cultivation of Christian virtue.

Gratitude

Individuals in the Cornerstone community are committed to cultivating the virtue of gratitude. This virtue is marked by *confession* of our neediness. It will be evident when we resist the temptation to feel entitled and:

- Acknowledge our deep need for God's salvation, confessing our state of sinfulness and helplessness before him and receiving the glorious gift of redemption (1 John 1:9; 1 Tim. 1:12-17),
- Consciously depend on the gifts for life and service that are bestowed on us by our Father, freeing us from anxiety and worry (Matt. 6:11; 25-34; Luke 11:11-13; Phil. 4:6-7; James 1:5,17),
- Regularly incorporate prayers of thanksgiving into our personal and public worship practices (Psalm 100:4-5; Phil. 1:3-6; 4:6-7; Col. 3:15; 1 Thess. 5:18),
- Express our gratitude to the Father through our gracious and kind responses to others (Matt. 18:21-35; Luke 7:36-50; 1 Tim. 1:15-16),
- Express our gratitude to others for the ways in which they bless and enhance our lives (Eph. 1:16; Col. 3:15).

Biblical/historical foundation:

The root of gratitude for the Christian is in the character of a gracious God, expressed through His loving interaction with His creation. More than a response to the kindness of another, gratitude is an orientation of need – a recognition that another has provided what we both needed and were unable to provide for ourselves. The psalmist often calls God's people to gratitude as an appropriate means of receiving and responding to God's grace. Gratitude is most appropriate, of course, as a response to the gift of salvation, resulting in forgiveness and new life in Christ. Jesus clearly taught that when we are truly aware of our need for grace, our lives overflow in gratitude when that grace is received.

Role in a learning community:

Gratitude within the Cornerstone community will be evident in the way that individuals approach, and then respond to the experiences, insights, and opportunities available to them. The educational endeavor approached in humility results in profound gratitude for the disciplined research and scholarly inquiry that combine to produce wisdom in the lives of the learner and the teacher alike. The unique experience of a residential campus also can breed gratitude for the insights and interactions gained in an intentional Christian community.

Role in influencing culture:

Likewise, our engagement with culture as citizens of Christ's Kingdom can and should be marked by gratitude. This is negatively commanded in Christ's parable of the unforgiving servant, which spotlights the sinfulness of responding ungraciously when lavish grace has been received. The apostle Paul demonstrates this mandate positively when reflecting on his gratitude for Christ's grace on him, the "worst of sinners." His recognition was that God's grace was to then serve as a model for others – an extension of Paul's profound gratitude. A spirit of gratitude in our relationships, the workplace and generally speaking in all of our endeavors will mark us as unique in a world characterized by attitudes of entitlement and posturing for rights and privilege.

Hospitality

Individuals in the Cornerstone community are committed to cultivating the virtue of hospitality. This virtue is marked by *consideration*. It will be evident when we reject an attitude of isolation and insensitivity to others and:

- Follow the example of Christ in putting the needs of others before our own (Phil. 2:1-8),
- Sympathetically engage in dialogue with others whose perspectives, beliefs, and backgrounds may be different from our own (John 4:1-42),
- Willingly step outside our comfort zone to make others feel safe and welcome (Luke 10),
- Embrace opportunities to translate consideration into practical action by sharing of ourselves to meet the needs of others (Rom. 12:13, Heb. 13:2, 1 Peter 4:9).

Biblical/historical foundation:

Hospitality, for the Christian, is rooted in our understanding of the incarnation of Christ, the One who humbly embraced the fullness of humanity to offer Himself for us. During His earthly ministry Christ often shocked the religious establishment by devoting attention to “sinners” and by casting an outcast such as a Samaritan as the hero of a parable. His apostles, living out the tension and opportunity of hospitable engagement found themselves scattered around the known world, ministering to *and with* people from backgrounds that would otherwise have been unfamiliar to them. Little wonder, then, that the commandment to practice hospitality makes its way into several of the Apostles’ letters to the early church.

Role in a learning community:

Within the Cornerstone community, the active cultivation of hospitality as a virtue will provide students, staff, and faculty with a sense of belonging as they are welcomed into the common task of the academic community. A diversity of perspectives will be valued and as individuals, we will welcome the ways in which the views of others can shape and mold our own. The community will be marked by the kind of consideration that seeks out opportunities to care for one another’s needs.

Role in influencing culture:

As a reflection of our commitment to extending Christ’s Kingdom, the virtue of hospitality will mark our methods of cultural engagement. We will respectfully and sincerely seek to understand the perspectives of those whose faith is different than our own, believing that charitable discourse is possible without the compromise of our core beliefs. A commitment to hospitality will inform and energize our capacity to cross cultural boundaries in a way that seeks to understand, as well as to be understood. Hospitality will motivate us to sacrificial and charitable service as a response to the gracious gifts of God. We will bring peace to chaos, healing and help to the needy and engender an environment that values the needs and perspectives of others.

Self-Discipline

Individuals in the Cornerstone community are committed to cultivating the virtue of self-discipline. This virtue is marked by *consistency*. It will be evident when we cease to live solely by the random impulses of our own desires and instincts and:

- Perseveringly embrace moments of discipline and trial, even though painful, as opportunities for spiritual growth and maturity (Heb. 12:1-13, James 1:2-8)
- Value and pursue temperance and moderation as beneficial markers of maturity in our lives (Prov. 13:4),
- Demonstrate integrity and perseverance in our academic and vocational pursuits (Gal. 6:9),
- Acknowledge that living effectively in community requires us to occasionally relinquish personal freedoms for the sake of others (Rom. 14:1-23; 1 Cor. 9:19-23),
- Cultivate habits that lead to a life of consistent growth and maturity as a follower of Jesus (1 Cor. 9:24-27; Gal. 6:7-10).

Biblical/historical foundation:

An emphasis on the virtue of self-discipline is appropriately understood, for the Christian, within the context of God's grace. We are freed to pursue lives of self-discipline and righteousness only after God has delivered us from slavery to our sinful desires (Rom. 6-7). Apart from Christ's intervention, our attempts at righteous self-discipline are best categorized as "filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6) or as "garbage" compared to the surpassing joy of knowing Christ (Phil. 3:8-9). Empowered by the Holy Spirit, however, self-discipline becomes a joyful response to God's grace (Rom. 12:1), a means of experiencing the blessing of living according to God's design (Psalm 1), and an opportunity to sow seeds that bear good fruit in our lives and in the lives of others (Gal. 5:13-26).

Role in a learning community:

Within the Cornerstone community, an emphasis on the virtue of self-discipline will bear fruit in the excellence and integrity of our scholarship. We will be disciplined in our use of time and devote ourselves to the hard work of study and learning. Our capacity for perseverance and temperance will positively affect our relationships. The interactions of our community will be marked by humble self-discipline as a response to God's grace, rather than proud legalism that subtly attempts to glorify self. As co-members of the community, faculty, staff, and students will view moments of correction as opportunities to demonstrate grace and to grow in maturity.

Role in influencing culture:

As a Kingdom value, cultivating the virtue of self-discipline will mark us with a capacity to live in a way that positively draws the attention of others and points to Christ (1 Peter 2:11-12). Self-discipline will equip us to willingly engage vocations and scholarship with rigor, integrity, and perseverance. Our capacity for self-discipline will also serve to preserve our witness and capacity for leadership in the church (1 Tim. 3:1-13) and will protect the relationships that are closest to us (Heb. 13:4-5; 1 Thess. 4:3-8).

Faith

Individuals in the Cornerstone community are committed to cultivating the virtue of faith. This virtue is marked by *conviction*. It will be evident when we cease to drift toward doubt and unbelief and:

- Accept the free gifts of eternal life and peace with God by trusting in Christ's death as atonement for our sins (Rom, 1:16-17; 3:28; 5:1-2; Eph. 2:8-9),
- Actively choose to align our actions and our thoughts according to God's Word (James 2:14-26),
- Embrace realities that we have not yet seen, demonstrating our trust in God with obedience (John 20:24-29; Heb. 11:1-40),
- Develop a set of core beliefs that will identify who we are, mark our behaviors and unalterably stand even in the midst of trial and cultural resistance (2 Tim. 1:6-14),
- Acknowledge our doubts and ask the Lord to strengthen our faith (Mark 9:14-29; Luke 17:5-6).

Biblical/historical foundation:

Scripture clearly points to the critical part that faith plays in following God. Faith is the starting point of the Christian journey and is essential to pleasing God (Heb. 11). During the ministry of Christ, he not only commended the faith of individuals that he encountered, he was moved to act on their behalf, granting spiritual and physical healing (Matt. 9:1-5; 18-26). Cultivating the virtue of faith is not a passive process. Scripture describes it as a way of living (2 Cor. 5:7) and makes clear that faith is demonstrated in the way we live our lives (James 2:14-26). Ultimately, we are reminded that Christ is both the Author and Perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2) and that God will carry to completion the work He has begun in us (Phil. 1:6).

Role in a learning community:

Our campus is intentionally structured to be a community of faith. The spiritually formative practices of our community will serve to remind us of the object of our faith – God and His work on our behalf – and to kindle our faith into worship and action. In our scholarship, faith couples with humility, drawing us to wonder and the acknowledgement that there are mysteries that we do not fully understand, yet embrace because of what has been revealed to us in God's Word. As faculty and staff, faith equips us to look for evidence of God's work in the lives of students, recognizing that their intellectual, moral, and spiritual development is not ultimately dependent on our role. We believe that a learning environment where faith is practiced will enable students to form life-long core convictions that will guide, protect and define their lives and actions.

Role in influencing culture:

As citizens of the Kingdom, our calling includes inviting others to a life of faith through the proclamation of the Gospel. We will reject the false dichotomy of social justice versus evangelism; we will express our faith both in our actions and in our willingness to verbally communicate the Gospel to unbelievers in winsome and relevant ways. Our faith will serve to direct us (James 1:5-7) and to draw us back to trust in God's provision for our needs (Matt. 6:25-34). Our faith will equip us, as well, for the cultivation of other virtues such as hope, wisdom, justice, and courage. It is expected that at times, our faith will make us the subject of others' skepticism, derision, and persecution. In those moments, however, our trust will continue to be in Christ and His work (John 16:16-33). Our deep and abiding faith will provide an unshakeable foundation of core convictions, granting us a purpose for which we are not only willing to live, but also willing to die.

Hope

Individuals in the Cornerstone community are committed to cultivating the virtue of hope. This virtue is marked by *confidence*. It will be evident when we resist pessimism and despair and instead:

- Place our hope in the character of God and in the promises of His Word (Psalm 42; 43; 119:43, 49, 74, 81, 114, 116, 147),
- Humbly live in a way that expresses our hope in Christ's righteousness, not our own (Gal. 5:1-6; Phil. 3:1-10),
- Find strength and encouragement in seasons of trial, suffering and grief because of the hope offered in the Gospel (Rom. 5:1-7; 1 Cor. 15:12-28; 1 Thess. 4:13-18),
- Anticipate the coming of Christ with joy, grateful for the new life that we have received because of His resurrection (1 Peter 1:3-12; John 14:1-4).

Biblical/historical foundation:

As Christians, we choose to reclaim the concept of hope, freeing it from connotations of fervent wishes or ambiguous expectation. Hope, throughout the Old and New Testaments is tangibly rooted in the character and promises of God. Thus, believers place their hope in that which although unseen, is real and is trustworthy. The virtue of hope is often cultivated through seasons of pain and struggle, when we experience God's presence and a longing for His Kingdom in a unique way. Additionally, hope equips to deal with seasons of pain and struggle, reminding us that God's Kingdom is at hand and providing us with a different perspective on our difficulties (Rom. 8:18-25).

Role in a learning community:

Within the campus community, hope allows us to see others through the lens of God's enduring work in their lives (Philippians 1:6). In humility, we will also be regularly reminded of the futility of placing our hope and confidence in our own abilities, our scholarship, and our resources. Our hope must be in the character and work of God, who graciously allows us to be stewards of the opportunities and gifts entrusted to us. The virtue of hope will also uniquely equip us to serve and support one another through seasons of difficulty and grief (2 Cor. 1:3-7).

Role in influencing culture:

When we, as CU faculty, staff, students, and alumni, are actively engaging culture and pursuing a measure of Kingdom influence we will often encounter situations that appear hopeless. The effects of sin, both general and individual, often ravage personal and social landscapes, presenting us with situations that appear beyond redemption. It is in those moments that the virtue of hope, cultivated during our years at Cornerstone will equip and motivate us for continued ministry. Hope equips us to envision a fallen world that has been redeemed to reflect the Kingdom, sustaining us in the pursuit of our calling. Our experience of dependence on God's character can be an encouragement and source of strength to those we are serving, particularly as we serve as ambassadors of the hope of new life in Christ. Our hope in the certain victory of Jesus will equip us not only to endure, but also to thrive with a spirit of resilient joy rather than defeat and discouragement.

Love

Individuals in the Cornerstone community are committed to cultivating the virtue of love. This virtue is marked by *compassion*. It will be evident when we reject self-centeredness and indifference and:

- Recognize and respond to the love of God which has been extended to us, realizing that He has loved us first (John 3:16; Rom. 8:31-39; 1 John 3:1; 4:7-10),
- Embrace the reality that God's undeserved mercy to us should motivate us to extend compassionate love to those around us (Matt. 18:21-35; 1 John 4:19),
- Embody the essential nature of love in the ways that we relate to one another in kindness, patience, and perseverance (1 Cor. 13:1-8, Col. 3:12-14),
- Demonstrate our love for God and for others in acts that care for tangible needs (Luke 10:25-37; Matt. 25:31-46; John 13:1-7; James 1:27),
- Allow the love of Christ to compel us to proclamation of the Gospel and to the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:11-21).

Biblical/historical foundation:

Among the virtues to be embodied in the life of a Christian, Paul points out that love is the greatest. This is not only because other gifts and virtues without love are worthless (1 Cor. 13), but because unfailing, faithful love is the embodiment of God's character (1 John 4:7-8). His love is actively and faithfully oriented toward His creation, whether pictured as a husband who loves despite infidelity (Hosea) or as a father who loves despite rejection (Luke 15:11-32). It is because of God's merciful love that we are not consumed (Lam. 3:22-23) and that we are offered the free gift of salvation through Christ (John 3:16). Love of God forms the root of the Great Commandment – to love the Lord our God with heart, soul, mind, and strength (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37), which is then extended to the related commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves. (Matt. 22:39; Lev. 19:18).

Role in a learning community:

A Christian campus community offers numerous opportunities to grow in our love for God and for others. Our academic pursuits should remind us of our value in God's eyes and can deepen our sense of wonder and delight in Who He is and what He has done. A season of living in community provides countless opportunities to bear one another's burdens, to ask for and to extend forgiveness, and to tangibly care for one another's needs in compassionate action. Love will define and enrich our capacity to collaborate with one another, valuing the unique gifts offered by each member of the community (1 Cor. 12:12-31) and considering the needs of others before our own (Phil. 2:1-4).

Role in influencing culture:

Love serves as a primary characteristic of citizens of the Kingdom (John 13:34-35). The healthy, loving relationships of Christian families and Christian communities will serve as a winsome invitation into a full, vibrant life. Additionally, many of our most significant opportunities to influence culture and to proclaim the gospel will start with seeds of compassion that bear fruit in loving action (Mark 6:34; 8:32). The mandate of reflecting God's loving character extends, as well, into loving our enemies (Matt. 5:43-48), an act that stands directly in contrast to the world around us.

Wisdom

Individuals in the Cornerstone community are committed to cultivating the virtue of wisdom. This virtue is marked by *clarity*. It will be evident when we cease to have confidence solely in our own perspectives and:

- Value wisdom above every other earthly pursuit, cultivating an appetite to grow beyond knowledge to the skillful application of that knowledge (Prov. 2-3),
- Respond to the authority and splendor of a holy God in reverent fear, knowing that this is the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10),
- Ask in faith, in every situation of life, for the wisdom that God promises as a Father who gives good gifts to His children (James 1:5-8),
- Trust in and without shame proclaim the truth of Christ's work on the Cross, recognizing that the wisdom of God appears as foolishness to the world (1 Cor. 1:18-31),
- Delight in the pursuit of knowing and living out the principles and practices of Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Luke 2:52; Col. 2:3; Phil. 3:7-14)

Biblical/historical foundation:

In the pages of the Proverbs wisdom is personified, calling the reader to seek after her while offering not only direction, but protection and blessing, as well (Prov. 4). Wisdom begins with the fear of God and finds its culmination in the person of Jesus Christ. The freely offered gift of wisdom provides discernment, equipping us to understand and pursue God's will (Rom. 12:1-2, Phil. 1:9-11). Wisdom, beyond mere knowledge, finds expression in actions and attitudes that are aligned with God's character.

Role in a learning community:

As an academic community, we have the privilege of cultivating wisdom through the exploration of a variety of disciplines and subjects. Believing that Christ is the source of all truth and knowledge and that the created world reveals God's truth in a variety of ways, our scholarship will lead us to worship. Our desire for wisdom will compel us to move beyond the acquisition of mere knowledge to the application of that knowledge in ways that conform to God's character and perspectives. Additionally, we believe that our intellectual pursuits will better equip us to better discern and respond to God's calling – specific outcomes of wisdom. In humility we recognize this as a lifelong pursuit; not a project that ends with the completion of an academic degree. Opportunities to grow in wisdom extend beyond the classroom to the numerous decisions and challenges faced by members of the Cornerstone community.

Role in influencing culture:

The complex cultural issues facing the world also demand careful discernment and the pursuit of God's wisdom. Our students will be well-equipped for the specific tasks and competencies required, but more than that, their studies and the experiences afforded them at Cornerstone will draw them into the virtue of wisdom reflected in a Christ-like application of knowledge and the discernment to respond to a variety of life situations. This will allow them to better see the needs of the world as God sees them, while relying on God's provision of clarity and direction regarding their role in meeting those needs. Wisdom will also enable them to find favor with those with whom they work and live.

Courage

Individuals in the Cornerstone community are committed to cultivating the virtue of courage. This virtue is marked by *commitment*. It will be evident when we reject the debilitating effects of fear and insecurity and:

- Recognize and are strengthened by the knowledge of God's abiding presence in our lives, particularly in the face of adversity or persecution (Joshua 1:6-9),
- Encourage one another with the promise of Christ's return and His power over sin, death and the forces of this world (John 14:1-4; 16:31-33; 1 Cor. 15:51-58),
- Stand firm in our convictions, choosing to fear God rather than people (Matt. 10:16-28; Acts 4:1-31)
- Boldly proclaim the Gospel even when opposed, recognizing that it is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16-17; Ephesians 6:18-20; Colossians 4:2-6).

Biblical/historical foundation:

Followers of Christ recognize that their obedience to God's call requires courage. This virtue is highlighted throughout the Old Testament as characteristic of leaders such as Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, and numerous other kings, priests, and prophets. As with other virtues, courage was rooted in these individuals' awareness of God's character and presence in their lives. Their courage was not in their own abilities or resources, but in God's promises and action on their behalf (Psalm 20:6-9). This theme is picked up in the New Testament as Jesus reminds us that the call to discipleship is costly, requiring us to take our crosses as we follow Him (Matthew 16:24). He promises, in fact, that believers can expect trouble – even persecution – as His followers. However, they can also count on His presence and ultimate victory (John 16:33). It is this reality that equips believers to stand firm in their convictions, even in the face of opposition. It has been the unflinching courage of Christians throughout the centuries that has been an impetus for the spread of the gospel.

Role in a learning community:

The academic community provides students at Cornerstone with an opportunity to have their convictions tested, challenged, shaped, and ultimately strengthened. The process of intellectual inquiry in and of itself requires courage and commitment; courage to challenge existing presuppositions and patterns of thought and commitment to persevere through the rigors of effective scholarship. Furthermore, we will demonstrate the courage to practice integrity in our academic lives and hold others accountable for doing the same. Within a Christian community, this courage will find its source in God's abiding presence and His enduring Word. The resolve that is strengthened and refined will find ongoing expression as students prepare for cultural influence.

Role in influencing culture:

As citizens of Christ's Kingdom, members of the Cornerstone community should anticipate opposition and perhaps even persecution. Christ reminds us that this is part and parcel of our identification with Him (John 15:18-25). The pages of Scripture and centuries of church history remind us of the importance (and privilege) of standing firm in our convictions, remaining committed to Christ, especially when those convictions and their resulting actions require courageous sacrifice.

Justice

Individuals in the Cornerstone community are committed to cultivating the virtue of justice. This virtue is marked by *concern*. It will be evident when we reject prejudice or ignorance that blinds us to the injustices around us and:

- Turn our attention to the needs of those who are marginalized and distressed (Is. 1:16-17; Is. 58; Micah 6:8; Prov. 29:7),
- Long for the promised restoration of shalom brought about by God's righteous judgment (Amos 5:24; Psalm 103:6; 140:12; Jer. 9:23-24),
- Recognize the inauguration of Christ's just and righteous reign as the fulfillment of Messianic prophecies (Luke 4:16-21; Matt. 12:15-21; Is. 9:6-7; 61:1-3),
- Serve as ambassadors of Christ's peace and reconciliation, empowered by His work on our behalf (Matt. 5:2-12; Eph. 2:11-22; 2 Cor. 5:11-21).

Biblical/historical foundation:

The Bible firmly establishes that God is the Righteous Judge (Psalm 7:11; 9:4,8; 96:13) who is perfectly just in all His ways (Psalm 9:16, 36:6, 89:14). As prophets addressed the people of God in the Old Testament, often their most scathing indictments pointed to the nation's neglect of justice, particularly in demonstrating tangible concern for the plight of the marginalized and wounded among them. As agents of the God who restores shalom – the right ordering of individual lives, institutions, and societies – they had failed and experienced God's judgment. In the midst of these oracles, however, the prophets pointed to the One who would reign in justice; the coming Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6-7). Indeed, as Christ's work on earth was inaugurated, He announced Himself as the fulfillment of these Messianic prophecies (Luke 4:16-21). Ultimately, His atoning death on the cross would satisfy a just God, achieving a permanent peace for those who would believe (Rom. 5:1), commissioning His followers as ambassadors of His peace and agents of His reconciling justice (2 Cor. 5:11-21).

Role in a learning community:

Within the Cornerstone community, then, we will actively concern ourselves with the needs of others, looking beyond our own interests (Phil. 2:1-4). Our scholarship and our educational experiences will expose us to issues of injustice on individual, institutional, and societal levels and will call us to both analysis and action. In the moments of disequilibrium fostered by our exposure to injustice, we will be reminded of God's simple, yet compelling call for us to "do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God." (Micah 6:8)

Role in influencing culture:

A commitment to justice and concern for the oppressed will also mark our cultural engagement as Kingdom citizens. We recognize that Christ will call on us to account for action taken on behalf of the hungry, the naked, the stranger, the sick, and the imprisoned (Matt. 25:31-46) and so we will ask for His power to make us effective agents of His compassion and care. As we encounter societal sin, structural injustice, and humankind's capacity for atrocities, we will seek to right the wrong and ultimately trust in the justice of our Righteous Judge who will one day right all wrongs and wipe away every tear (Rev. 20-21).

Conclusion: The Virtues in a Christian Learning Community

As Cornerstone University invites the members of our community to cultivate these virtues in their lives, this process must:

- *Recognize that these virtues are a reflection of our identity as people of His Kingdom.*
Our ultimate desire is to consistently bring the values and virtues of his Kingdom to redemptively bear on a fallen world that is in need of a glimpse of the world to come. This is essential to our mandate for cultural influence.
- *Be rooted in the power of the Holy Spirit rather than our own attempts at self-righteousness.*
We rely on the work of Christ and his Spirit as both the starting point and end point of our righteousness. While He created us for good works, our salvation is exclusively by grace through faith in His atoning sacrifice.
- *Cultivate Christ-like humility rather than pride in our own lives.*
The defining characteristic of Christ's complete humanity was humility. As we grow and mature, we will be reminded often of our own weakness, relying on Christ's strength and the grace of others in our community.
- *Provide opportunities for grace and restoration rather than legalistic judgment.*
It is expected that members of our campus community are at different stages in their spiritual growth and maturity. Often, we will act in ways that are less than virtuous. These moments should be occasions for grace, even in accountability.
- *Be motivated by the Kingdom's narrative rather than moralistic checklists.*
As citizens of Christ's Kingdom, practicing the virtues allows us to live out the Kingdom's story now (Wright, 2010). Our invitation to these practices can and should reflect our desire to live out a more fulfilling and compelling story (Smith, 2013).
- *Incorporate daily, long-term habits rather than short-term attempts at piety.*
The cultivation of virtue consists of numerous daily choices and ongoing habits both inform and reinforce our vision of the Kingdom (Smith, 2013). It is expected that this process will take time. In fact, it is a lifelong calling.
- *Glorify God rather than ourselves or our community.*
Scripture reminds us that living by God's Word brings blessing to our lives. A community marked by virtuous attitudes and actions will be inviting and winsome. Truly virtuous practices, however, will glorify God alone.

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