

NOW IS THE TIME

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES & KNOWING WHAT TO DO



VINEYARD CHURCH GLENDORA

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

Back in January of 2021, our Discernment team made up of Elders, Staff, and Pastors, presented a vision to Vineyard Church Glendora. The vision was something that had been nurtured and discerned over many years, but that became more clear as we set aside intentional time, as a church community, to reimagine what it could look, feel, and sound like to become the church God had called us to be. And, **now is the time** to respond to the beautiful invitation to become what has been imagined!

This booklet is designed to take you on a journey where you spend time becoming more attentive to the work of the Holy Spirit in your own life, as you find yourself in the vision of the Vineyard Co/Gather. Together as a community, we'll be working through weekly devotionals, times of prayer and fasting, and times of gathering in-person and online, which are designed to help us discern how you might contribute to the growth of Vineyard Church Glendora as we launch the Co/Gather!

Below, you'll find an overview of how we'll spend each week. And parents - we encourage you to get your kids involved as well! Our Y2K ministry will be releasing relevant, weekly material for you to work through together as a family.

Welcome to the Co/Gather - Now is the time!

OVERVIEW:

WEEK 1 - REFRESH AND REMEMBER: Refresh yourself on what our vision is and remember that fundraising is a spiritual act

WEEK 2 - SET APART AND STEWARD: Set apart this time to listen to the Lord and steward the resources you have been given

WEEK 3 - DISCERN AND DEDICATE: Discern an amount that the Lord might want you to give to the Co/Gather and dedicate that amount to the Lord

WEEK 4 - CONTRIBUTE AND CONNECT: Contribute your amount to the church and begin making connections with who else might need to be brought into this vision

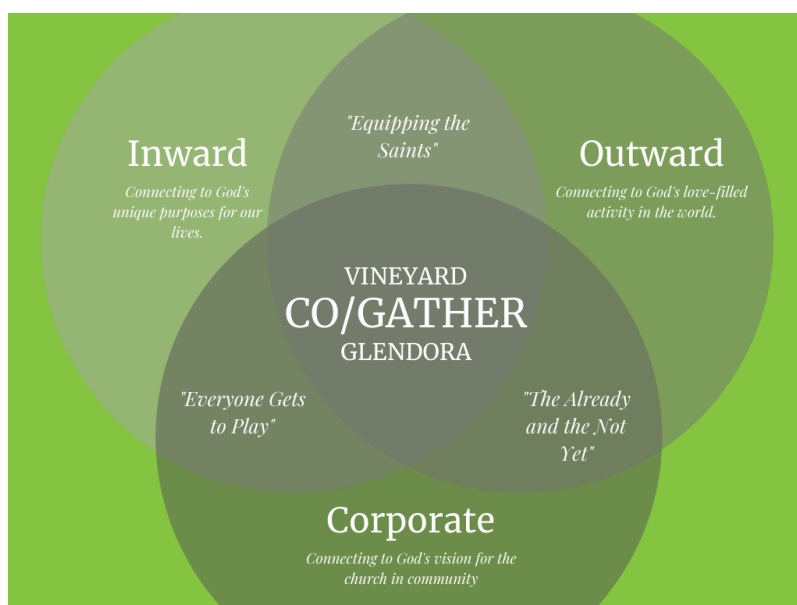
WEEK 1: REFRESH AND REMEMBER

Over the last 10+ years, God has guided Vineyard Church Glendora through every phase of growth and development as well as pruning and listening. The last 18 months have been no different. We have all been through a lot since March of 2020: the globe shutting down, massive shifts in culture, divisiveness everywhere you turn, and a general sense languishing in all things.

Despite the challenges of the last year, we believe that the Church is still the best response to a hurting and broken world! At Vineyard Church Glendora, we have been going through a process of discernment about our next phase, even prior to the pandemic. We have known for many years that God has a bigger vision for VCG than we could ever imagine! Christopher Wright reminds us, **“It’s not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world, as that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission—God’s mission.”**

We believe the church today that joins God on mission by understanding the times and knowing what to do, must be a careful and conscientious observer to the growing trends and needs within the community. This is the foundation for the Vineyard Co/Gather.

We believe that through the development of the Vineyard Co/Gather, we are creating a physical space embedded within the community where we can align our theological convictions with our cultural time, and our needs as a church body. The Vineyard Co/Gather will be a multi-functional space where we and our community can gather together, every day of the week, to develop our inward, outward, and corporate growth.



We also believe that this is a journey that we are called on together through the stewardship of our resources. Our dedication to advancing the work of God through our financial giving will ultimately lead us to a place of more profound connection with God, each other and our community. Throughout the next 4 weeks, we will be journeying together in praying, fasting, and petitioning on behalf of the Vineyard Co/Gather.

A large part of this adventure will be fundraising together for this work. Henri Nouwen reminds us that, **“Fundraising is, first and foremost, a form of ministry. It is a way of announcing our vision and inviting other people into our mission...Fundraising is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer other people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and mission.”**

Ultimately, the heart of Vineyard Church Glendora has been, and will continue to be, a porous and unboundaried church; a place where we don't just bring people into a building for an event or a service, but instead a place where we naturally and fluidly invite people into love-filled relationships with God, themselves, and each other. We believe that the Vineyard Co/Gather is the next avenue for Vineyard Church Glendora to join God in the mission of restoration and redemption of Glendora and beyond.

For further information, feel free to check out **www.VineyardCoGather.com** where you can find videos, brochures, pictures and schematics, and more. If you're interested in watching our Vision video from January 2021 where we initially presented this idea, you can find that by scanning this QR code. We also created a one-page document available on the website that succinctly articulates the need and vision for the Co/Gather.



QUESTIONS TO MEDITATE ON THIS WEEK:

- What part of this vision resonates with you most?
- Are there any questions still lingering about what the Co/Gather is or could be?
- Where do you see God at work in this vision? Where do you see yourself in this vision?

PRAYER AND FASTING FOR THIS WEEK:

Each week, we will be committing Wednesday mornings, from your wake up to lunch, as a time of prayer and fasting together as a church community. If you are unable to fast from food for medical reasons, please consider something else you can fast from as an act of responding to what God is doing in the life of our church (i.e. caffeine, social media, t.v., etc.). We will gather together every Wednesday at noon via zoom to break our fast together, pray, and offer reflections together.

We grieve with God that so many people in our communities, from young to old, are disconnected and isolated from God and one another. When we fast, we put before God our desire to become part of God's restoration plan. We hope that this time continues to unite us in mission, as a church body, while we look to the Lord for guidance, inspiration, and encouragement.

This week, during your prayer and fasting, keep these things in mind:

- The isolation of those in our community that disconnects them from God and others.
- The journey we are on together as a church community
- The physical space of the Co/Gather and its surrounding community
- Understanding what "Now is the Time" might mean for you and for Vineyard Church Glendora

WEEK 2: SET APART AND STEWARD

Jesus models what it looks like to set apart time and steward his resources from the very beginning of his ministry. Luke 3 and 4 tell the story of Jesus' baptism, which was the start of his public appearances. The scripture says in Luke 4v1-2, **“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.”** It goes on to say in verse 14, **“Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.”**

We see that Jesus, having been baptized and blessed by God, knew the power of setting apart time for God in order to live a life of faithful stewardship of what he had been given.

What might this look like for us today? Faithful stewardship starts with a fundamental understanding that God is good, God is loving, and God can be trusted. When we have faith, it pleases God because it reveals that we understand who God is and how God has meant for us to live - fully dependent on the One who gave us life, and life to the full! It's a sign of our freedom!

But living by faith isn't always easy, especially when you throw in the types of things we hold most dear - our time, our money, our relationships, our work, and more. How do we live by faith in such a way that we steward these resources instead of hoarding them, as culture encourages us to? Author N.T. Wright states, **“The temptation we humans face, which Jesus faced in the wilderness, is to snatch at the world to use it for our own pleasure or glory.”**

When Jesus set apart time before his ministry began, he taught us a way of stewarding our resources– he showed us a way of being human, which challenged the status quo at every point. Even in Jesus' time, the cultural norm was to love money, but Jesus reminded us that we cannot serve both God and money and called us to live generously instead. As stewards, we must remember that we are not owners of the gifts that God has given us. Our resources are “on-loan” from God and God expects us to use them generously!

Barna Research defines generosity in 5 main categories: Volunteering/Service, Emotional/Relational Support, Monetary Support, Gifts, and Hospitality. In their 2019 report on the ways generosity is expressed generationally, they state, **“It is important for church leaders to communicate to their congregation that generosity is not solely about financial gifts, but about discipling Christians for a long-term and whole-hearted expression of generosity—wherever they are in life.”**

In this season, we will be calling Vineyard Church Glendora to live generously through our financial giving, but we believe that comes from a deeper understanding of stewardship of all of our gifts. Ultimately, the vision that we have is to develop a place for connection, not just a building; it's a place to practice hospitality for our community, not just a coffee shop; and it's a place to advance the work of God to the ends of the earth each day, not just a place to gather on Sunday mornings. All of that will take all of us, living by faith together.

QUESTIONS TO MEDITATE ON THIS WEEK:

- How might the Lord be asking you to set apart this time before the new phase of ministry begins at VCG?
- When you look at the list of ways to express generosity, what stands out to you? What might be easiest for you? Most challenging?
- How do you envision the Co/Gather as a place to live out the 5 areas of generosity?

PRAYER AND FASTING FOR THIS WEEK:

Each week, we will be committing Wednesday mornings, from your wake up to lunch, as a time of prayer and fasting together as a church community. If you are unable to fast from food for medical reasons, please consider something else you can fast from as an act of responding to what God is doing in the life of our church (i.e. caffeine, social media, t.v., etc.). We will gather together every Wednesday at noon via zoom to break our fast together, pray, and offer reflections together.

Each week, we will be committing Wednesday mornings, from your wake up to lunch, as a time of prayer and fasting together as a church community. If you are unable to fast from food for medical reasons, please consider something else you can fast from as an act of

responding to what God is doing in the life of our church (i.e. caffeine, social media, t.v., etc.). We will gather together every Wednesday at noon via zoom to break our fast together, pray, and offer reflections together.

We grieve with God that so many people in our communities, from young to old, are disconnected and isolated from God and one another. When we fast, we put before God our desire to become part of God's restoration plan. We hope that this time continues to unite us in mission, as a church body, while we look to the Lord for guidance, inspiration, and encouragement.

This week, during your prayer and fasting, keep these things in mind:

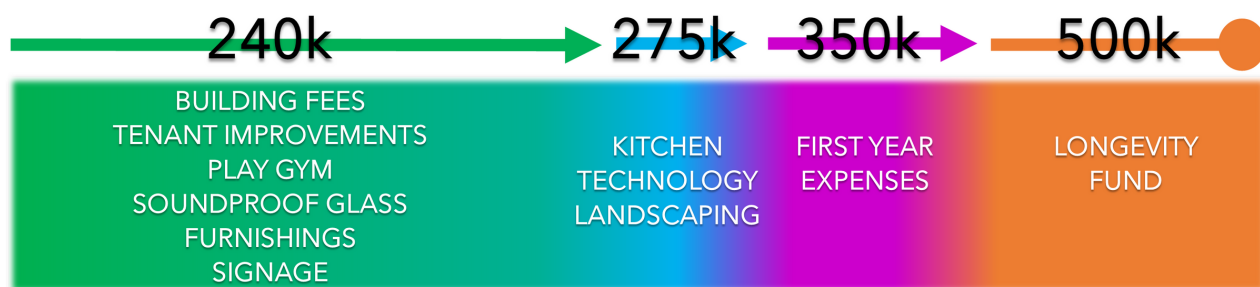
- The collective resources we have as a church community that God has given us to steward
- The Lord is speaking to us as we set apart this time - what is God saying?
- The foundation of the Co/Gather would be deeply grounded in all types of generosity
- The reflection of our lives as the reflection of a generous God

WEEK 3: DISCERN AND DEDICATE

“God’s kingdom is the place of abundance where every generous act overflows its original bounds and becomes part of the unbounded grace of God at work in the world.” -Henri Nouwen

There is a lot of bad theology about giving. Biblical scholars have spent a great deal of time trying to interpret the “rules” around tithing. But instead of restrictive formulas or percentages, God gives us many examples of empowering principles of giving from the New Testament. For example, Luke 21v1-4 tells the story of the widow giving sacrificially and Jesus praising her offering. Therefore, we are called to **GIVE SACRIFICIALLY**. In 1 Corinthians 16v2, Paul instructed the Corinthians to collect financial resources each week, which leads us to **GIVE CONSISTENTLY**. And in Ephesians 5v1-2, Paul charges them to be imitators of God as beloved children, which reminds us we should **GIVE JOYFULLY**. The Lord reminds us that nothing, not even the ups and downs of the U.S. economy, affects God or the resources God presides over. In *The God Ask*, Steve Shadrach says, ***“If we are faithful to sacrificially invest in the kingdom, God takes great joy to multiply those blessings back to us.”***

Through understanding the vision of the Co/Gather, and understanding what stewardship of your resources might look like, discernment regarding a financial commitment is the next step in the journey of living faithfully together. Vineyard Church Glendora has discerned that we need to raise \$500,000 to support the Co/Gather for the construction of the building, the furnishings inside (tables, chairs, playgym, kitchen, etc), and sustaining of the work of the Co/Gather for the first year and beyond.



We are specifically asking members of Vineyard Church Glendora to commit to giving and raising \$240,000 of the total amount needed. As we prayerfully ask you to discern a financial gift that you might commit to the overall amount, we believe we are really asking you to dedicate those funds to the Lord to strengthen and expand the work of the kingdom. We're also inviting you into a new, spiritual communion with the church body as a whole as we discern our collective offering and dedicate that to God. When we are gathered by this vision, it becomes easier to give sacrificially, to give consistently, and to give joyfully. Approached in this way, this fundraising project gives us the ability to be in communion with God and one another and invest all of what we have in the work of God together. God's heart for us is our freedom!

QUESTIONS TO MEDITATE ON THIS WEEK:

- What might it look like for you to give sacrificially? Consistently? Joyfully?
- How can this discernment and dedication process bring us closer in communion with God? With one another?
- What is the amount God is asking you to dedicate to the Co/Gather?

PRAYER AND FASTING FOR THIS WEEK:

Each week, we will be committing Wednesday mornings, from your wake up to lunch, as a time of prayer and fasting together as a church community. If you are unable to fast from food for medical reasons, please consider something else you can fast from as an act of responding to what God is doing in the life of our church (i.e. caffeine, social media, t.v., etc.). We will gather together every Wednesday at noon via zoom to break our fast together, pray, and offer reflections together.

We grieve with God that so many people in our communities, from young to old, are disconnected and isolated from God and one another. When we fast, we put before God our desire to become part of God's restoration plan. We hope that this time continues to unite us in mission, as a church body, while we look to the Lord for guidance, inspiration, and encouragement.

This week, during your prayer and fasting, keep these things in mind:

- The collective resources we have as a church community that God has given us to steward
- The Lord is speaking to us as we set apart this time - what is God saying?
- The foundation of the Co/Gather would be deeply grounded in all types of generosity
- The reflection of our lives as the reflection of a generous God

WEEK 4: CONTRIBUTE AND CONNECT

The theme for this capital campaign as we launch the Vineyard Co/Gather is, “Now is the Time”. This is a poignant reminder for us as we strive to be a church that has an understanding of the times we find ourselves in. We believe that Now is the Time for Vineyard Church Glendora to step out in faith as we develop this facility. You have a critical part to play in this work!

We believe that the Lord wants to show you where you fit into this vision and will help you see the resources that you have available, leading you to a financial amount to dedicate to the building of the Vineyard Co/Gather.

Now is the time to give faithfully, boldly, and generously.

In order to make your contribution, visit **www.VineyardCoGather.com** or simply scan this QR Code. You will be able to give any financial amount securely online through our website. You may also send in a check to our church office.



We also realize that we cannot do this alone. As a church community, we are but one vine of many branches that are committed to the work of advancing the kingdom of God in the world. In describing the “God Ask,” Shadrach says, **“I am simply a mediator seeking to connect God’s people and God’s resources with God’s plan.”** We need you to bring your community alongside us in the journey of the Vineyard Co/Gather. How might you be able to personally connect God’s people and God’s resources with God’s plan?

As we trust in the power of God for this space, we remember that it is God who is in control of this whole process. The reality of this allows us to approach others with gratitude for what we have received and what we will continue to receive. Nouwen says, **“Gratitude releases us from the bonds of obligation and prepares us to offer ourselves freely and fully for the work of the kingdom.”**

It is not just one person asking another for money, but instead, it’s about inviting others to be connected in kingdom ministry. When we yield to the invitation to simply be a mediator for

this work, we learn to trust that God can work through us no matter where we are or who we are with. The Lord is fully capable of putting just the right amount of funding into the Co/Gather at just the right time to fund just the right expenses.

Begin brainstorming a list of people that you might be able to approach with the vision of the Vineyard Co/Gather and invite them into this journey alongside you. All the resources you might need can be found at www.VineyardCoGather.com, including videos, brochures, pictures and schematics, and this very devotional booklet.

As we move into the next phase of the process, we are reminded of the rich and beautiful journey we have been on together. As we minister to each other, and our community, from the riches we possess together, we are ushering in the presence of God for the fullness of the Lord's Kingdom and together we proclaim: Now is the time.

QUESTIONS TO MEDITATE ON THIS WEEK:

- What does "Now is the Time" mean to you personally?
- How does approaching fundraising as gratitude release you from obligation and instead allow you to be a mediator, connecting God's people to God's work?
- Who might God be bringing to mind to join us on this journey and how can you reach out to them this week?

PRAYER AND FASTING FOR THIS WEEK:

Each week, we will be committing Wednesday mornings, from your wake up to lunch, as a time of prayer and fasting together as a church community. If you are unable to fast from food for medical reasons, please consider something else you can fast from as an act of responding to what God is doing in the life of our church (i.e. caffeine, social media, t.v., etc.). We will gather together every Wednesday at noon via zoom to break our fast together, pray, and offer reflections together.

We grieve with God that so many people in our communities, from young to old, are disconnected and isolated from God and one another. When we fast, we put before God our desire to become part of God's restoration plan. We hope that this time continues to unite us in mission, as a church body, while we look to the Lord for guidance, inspiration, and encouragement.

This week, during your prayer and fasting, keep these things in mind:

- The celebration of God's display of glory through the generosity of Vineyard Church Glendora
- That we will continue to discover what it means to be a church that is seeking to understand the times we are living in and know what to do
- The next phase of the Co/Gather as we continue to raise funds and break ground soon