

Cor Session Guide

Leadership Virtue Video Series





The Leadership Virtue Series Study Guide



These sessions of *Cor* seek to help men grow in their understanding of leadership particularly in two ways: first, how did Christ lead and speak of leadership? Second, what are some of the key virtues to understand we are called to live and model as leaders in our families and as Knights of Columbus.

Eight sessions about Leadership and Virtue are included in this guide and in the Leadership Virtue Series. This series can be found at <https://www.kofc.org/en/campaigns/leadership-series.html>. We encourage you to use all eight sessions in the order presented. Facilitators should read through each session prior to *Cor* to familiarize themselves with each session's content. There is no need to use all the suggested questions; please use only what you think will be helpful for your group.

You will need

- A copy of each session's study guide for each participant
- A/V setup for playing of online video each session

Cor Key Elements for these sessions:

- **Prayer:** Begin with Mass, if possible, or the Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- **Formation:** Watch the 8–10-minute video session with Dr. McInerney to begin each session. Encourage men to consider their own experience of leadership/being led by others as they watch the video.
- **Fraternity:** Suitable fraternal activities include sharing a meal, playing a sport or outdoor game, or simply having time for regular conversation before and/or after the session. Do what works best for your brothers Consult the [Cor Startup Guide](#) for additional examples.

Helpful Context

This *Cor* session guide is meant to stir thoughtful discussion among your men about the key issue of leadership. Men are naturally interested in this topic, and yet what leadership is, means, and calls us to is something a thousand books and gurus have weighed in on. How do we understand the call to lead as Catholic men, disciples of Jesus, in the confusing world in which we live? What are the principles Christ and the Church's long memory on character and leadership have given to us? How do we implement these today?

The video presentations are led by Dr. Joseph McInerney, retired Navy Captain and Senior Vice President of Leader Development for the Knights of Columbus. Dr. McInerney has extensive background in Leadership Education and Philosophy of Ethics at the U.S. Naval Academy. He and his wife, Ellen, along with their six children hail from Annapolis, Maryland.

The men should feel free to ask serious questions, challenge one another in a spirit of charity, and enjoy each other's company as friends and brothers in the Lord. A prayerful attitude should be observed when appropriate, but men also should be able to have fun at the right times, too.

Helpful information about facilitating small group discussions is included at the end of this document.



Episode One: *The Rationale for a Christ-Centered Approach to Leadership*

“Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and I have founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ founded his empire upon love; and at this hour millions of men would die for him.” Napoleon Bonaparte

Brief Summary: In this episode, Dr. McInerney lays out often ignored reasons why examining the life and teaching of Jesus Christ for leadership lessons is essential—Christ’s Incarnation demands this of us. Key themes are Jesus’s lessons for leaders: servanthood, love, and sacrifice.

Prayer: The Our Father

Watch: Episode One

Discuss:

1. Is the world correct to ignore Jesus as a leader? Why or why not?
2. What stories from the Gospels can you recall that hold insights into the leadership of Jesus?
3. In Matthew 25 and Mark 20, Jesus teaches that among his followers those wishing to be first must be last and be a “servant” to everyone else. Why is this the case and how does servanthood relate to leadership?
4. Why is love important for leadership?
5. **Action Item:** Thinking about Jesus’ example in the Gospels, reflect and pray about how you might react in the presence of Jesus as your leader. (This would be done most fruitfully while praying in His presence before the Eucharist).
 - a. Is there an aspect of Jesus’ leadership that would stand out to you?
 - b. What character traits of Jesus come to mind that enable Him to attract so many followers?
 - c. What are the implications of these observations for your own character?
 - d. What character traits does Jesus exhibit that you can emulate and develop in your own character?

Closing Prayer: Pray the Litany of Humility



Episode Two: What is Moral Virtue?

Be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect.” Jesus Christ

Brief Summary: Here, McInerney teaches important distinctions for leaders, who are called to moral virtue, that is to be men of moral excellence, not simply to follow rules. Jesus seems to give an impossible bar to his followers—perfect like the Father. Can we live this? What is the adventure we are called to here?

Prayer: The Our Father

Watch: Episode One

Discuss:

1. How should we understand Christ’s “impossibly high bar” for our lives? Read Matthew 5:43-48 to get the context, and discuss.
2. What are *virtues*? What do we mean by “*ethics*”?
3. What is the relationship between God’s grace and our own efforts?
4. How does a *virtue-based* approach to ethics differ from most modern approaches to ethics? For example, how would a virtue-based approach respond to the assertion, “I should be able to do whatever I want as long as I don’t hurt someone else in the act.”
5. What is the immediate practical effect of a virtuous choice or an non-virtuous choice?
6. **Action Item:** To be a servant-leader means to put the needs and growth of the followers ahead of one’s own. This is hard to do. So the habits of virtue, growing in us as leaders, are essential. In prayer this week, imagine a virtue you would like to have and apply it to leadership of others.

Closing Prayer: Pray the Litany of Magnanimity



Episode Three: The First Habit: Prayer

“Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Matthew 6:33

“Without me, you can do nothing.” John 15:5

Brief Summary: In this episode, McInerney starts the virtues with a less-considered one—prayer. Considerations of how and where to pray, and what prayer as a “habit” calls us to, are discussed.

Prayer: The Our Father

Watch: Episode One

Discuss:

1. We do not often think of prayer as a virtue. And yet it is a habit. According to the episode, it is the first habit of a Christian leader. What is your response to this?
2. “Wait, I know people who don’t pray at all, and they seem to do really well.” What is a response to this objection?
3. “Not a call to inaction.” We will, as lay leaders, act in the world. Connect prayer to action in a concrete example of a leader’s life. Discuss.
4. The 90% recovery of Vietnam veterans from heroin addiction upon their return to the States is a remarkable historical example of “environment impacting habits”. Can you relate to this environment/habits connection in your own life?
5. Environment impacts prayer. When you pray, in what environment do you place yourself? Is it consistent? What comes to mind when you think about environment in building a habit of prayer?
6. **Action Item:** “Strive to have your heart engaged in prayer when you pray.” A Biblical understanding of the “heart” is the center of the person, where mind, conscience, will, and emotions meet. The place where the “still, soft voice” of the Lord can be heard or mysteriously “sensed”. Silence is key, and also a habit important to begin. This week, engage in silent prayer for 10-15 minutes per day. Prepare to share the fruits next time you meet, and especially how your heart was engaged, or difficult to engage.

Closing Prayer: Pray the Litany of Humility



Episode Four: Passion and Leadership

“I came to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already kindled!” Luke 12:49

Brief Summary: Here, McInerney stirs the heart of leadership, examining the aspect of love we call eros, passionate love. Men are tempted to push aside passion as a sign of weakness, and yet Christ himself exhibited passion in his mission on earth. Some passions are good; others are not. How do we distinguish between them, embracing the good passions in leading ourselves and others?

Prayer: The Our Father

Watch: Episode One

Discuss:

1. Love is often used as a fuzzy term. But we can be more precise. “Passion is half the story of love.”
 - a. How is this the case? What is the importance of passion in a leader?
 - b. The emotionless philosophy of Stoicism is making a comeback among young men. In Stoicism, passions are considered the enemy of the virtuous man. How is this missing something important about leadership?
2. In his letter *God is Love*, Benedict XVI pointed to *eros, desiring love*, being part of God’s love as well as ours. The father’s love for the prodigal son—running, embracing, forgiving, celebrating him—is Jesus’ example of how loved we are by our Heavenly Father. What other examples in Scripture, Old or New Testament, can you think of which show God loving with eros, with passion?
3. In the list of the following leaders, name any moments or accomplishments they had which demanded passion for the mission:
 - a. Martin Luther King, Jr.
 - b. King David of Israel
 - c. George Washington
 - d. St. Peter
 - e. William Wallace as portrayed in *Braveheart*
4. What do you think distinguishes a virtuous passion and a rash emotional outburst or decision?
5. **Action Item:** between now and next *Cor* discussion, pray the *Litany of Magnanimity* found in these study sheets each morning. Prepare to engage the question of passion and how this prayer impacted your heart for God and for leadership.

Closing Prayer: Pray the Litany of Magnanimity



Episode Five: Magnanimity and Leadership

“God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next.” St. John Henry Newman

Brief Summary: Magnanimity is the desire and decision to boldly take on great tasks with knowledge of our virtues, talents and mission. It is not ego-gratification, but is perfectly compatible with the virtue of humility. Humility, likewise, keep magnanimity from slipping into pride. It is, in Christians, the secure sense that we are loved by our Father, and the resulting freedom to embrace His call to greatness, for His glory.

Prayer: The Our Father

Watch: Episode One

Discuss:

1. What is the difference between the vice of pride and the virtue of magnanimity?
2. Some of Christ’s statements are strikingly confident. What makes them different than an ego-trip?
 - a. “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.” John 14:6
 - b. “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” Matthew 24:35
 - c. “...the son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” Mark 2:28
3. Can you think of a leader you’ve known personally who exhibited the virtue of magnanimity? What was that experience like?
4. Mohandas Gandhi was referred to in his lifetime as “Mahatma”—*Great Soul* in Sanskrit. His mission, lived in poverty and solidarity with the poor people of India, in time caused the British colonial power to withdraw and gave the country its independence. What about Gandhi’s character exhibited greatness of soul?
5. St. John Henry Newman, toward the end of his life, wrote: “God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next.”
 - a. Do you have a sense of a personal mission, given to you by God?
 - b. How does this connect to leadership?
6. **Action Item:** This week, write out, in a paragraph or so, what you think your personal mission as a man and leader might be. Consider your past, your vocation, your conscience’s call on a problem to solve in the world, and where your efforts have clearly borne fruit in the past as you write. This is a big question, and it is OK if you don’t have complete clarity on this yet. But begin. Bring the result to *Cor* discussion next week.

Closing Prayer: Pray the Litany of Magnanimity



Episode Six: *The Paradox of Humble Leadership*

“In reality, there is, perhaps, no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as pride.” Benjamin Franklin

“(The pope is) Servant of the servants of God.” Title of the Holy Father in Papal Bulls

Brief Summary: In this episode, McInerney examines a frequently mentioned but rarely lived virtue of leadership: humility. What does it really mean to lead—as a servant? How can we understand the crucial importance of this virtue as leaders, who must not shy away from authority, but who must not forget who we really are?

Prayer: The Our Father

Watch: Episode One

Discuss:

1. Which of these statements best defines humility?
 - a. It is the opposite of pride.
 - b. It is a seeking of lowliness, the position of servant.
 - c. It is living in the truth.
 - d. It is forgetfulness of self.
2. “It is through humility that an authentic leader can establish a relationship with his or her followers.”
 - a. Brainstorm behaviors that demonstrate true humility in a leader.
3. “The motivation of a true leader cannot be glory. It must be love.”
 - a. This statement could seem like shallow piety or moralism. But can we demonstrate it to be true?
 - b. What are the predictable results of a leader bent on glory? What about a leader focused on love?
4. **Action Item:** This week, pray the *Litany of Humility* found in these Study Sheets each day. Pay attention to the challenge and effect this prayer has in you. Prepare to discuss at next *Cor* discussion.

Closing Prayer: Pray the Litany of Humility



Episode Seven: Magnanimity and Taking a Stand

“The Lord God is my help; therefore I am not disgraced. I set my face like flint, knowing I shall not be put to shame.” The Prophet Isaiah

Brief Summary: Here, the practical, rubber-meets-the-road situation of the virtuous life—taking an unpopular stand for truth and justice—leads us to consider the crucial virtue of magnanimity. What can we do in our daily lives to prepare ourselves for this unavoidable moment, or series of moments, that will prove the truth or falsity of our leadership?

Prayer: The Our Father

Watch: Episode One

Discuss:

1. In this video, Dr. McNerney points to a particular moment in a leader’s life, a moment when he must take a stand for an important matter.
 - a. Have you had personally or witnessed such a moment? What was the stand and what was the result?
2. What is the role of the virtue of magnanimity in such a moment? Why is magnanimity necessary?
3. Dr. McNerney lists the following practical steps in preparing to take a stand in an important moment:
 - a. Consider the practical wisdom of the stand; is this the time and right moment?
 - b. Taking the necessary risk, ready to suffer if needed.
 - c. Thinking thoroughly about your arguments and counter-arguments.
 - d. Keeping our cool in the heat of the moment of communicating your point.
 - e. Prepare ahead of time; practice the argument.
 - f. Listen; your patience is key to winning a hearing.
 - g. Temper your magnanimity with humility; you might be wrong, and will need to admit this is the case if revealed to be true.
 - h. Which of these have I applied, or failed to apply, in my process of preparing to take a stand? What happened as a result?
4. “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth.” Job 19:25
 - a. Any humiliation born for the truth, as in the example of Christ, is temporary. Our ultimate aim is heaven, not victory and power on earth.
 - i. React to this. How does it strike you as you consider a future moment where you must take an unpopular stand?
5. **Action Item:** Between tomorrow and next *Cor* discussion, pray the *Litany of Magnanimity* each day. Pay attention to the movement in your soul, called to “greatness of soul”. Prepare to discuss next time.

Closing Prayer: Pray the Litany of Magnanimity



Episode Eight: Humility and Emotional Intelligence

“Leaders need to be students of people...Emotionally intelligent leaders are able to focus on their followers, (sensitive to signs of negative or positive emotion); humility is the virtue that facilitates that.”

Brief Summary: In this episode, Dr. McInerney transitions us from virtue to a practical skill connected to virtue—“emotional intelligence”. Learned through study and practice, the leader with this skill more easily builds relationship with those he or she leads. Aspects of this skill are “reading the room” and “active listening”.

Prayer: The Our Father

Watch: Episode One

Discuss:

1. In this video, Dr. McInerney describes a particular skill of leadership that is necessary and depends on the virtue of humility. This skill is called *emotional intelligence*.
 - a. Why is this a helpful skill for leaders?
 - b. What is the link to the virtue of humility?
2. “Practice observing people’s emotional responses and how your communication is landing.” How do we practice this?
3. The following enemies of humility and emotional intelligence were mentioned:
 - a. Arrogance—“Arrogance is the parent of envy.”
 - b. Defensiveness—“Defensive leaders will not receive the necessary feedback from their followers.”
 - i. Discuss an experience you’ve had with leadership and these unproductive habits.
 - ii. Discuss a leader you’ve known that, conversely, exhibited emotional intelligence as a regular practice.
4. **Action Item:** In prayer this week, reflect on your key relationships, with spouse, children, friends, colleagues as they arise to your mind. Then, focus on one of those relationships which comes to mind. What one aspect of emotional intelligence would you like to apply in this relationship more often. (Watching for reactions; asking for honest feedback; humble admission of fault or desire to understand better, etc.) *Consider one step with a particular relationship and try it this week. What was the result?*

Closing Prayer: Pray the Litany of Humility



Key Prayers

The Litany of Magnanimity

Lord Jesus Christ, priest, prophet, and king, Hear me.

From the desire for a comfortable life, Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire for passing pleasures, Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire to remain as a child, Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire for wealth without work, Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire for cheap grace, Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire to live in unchallenging times, Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire to wait until I am ready, Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire for this-worldly security, Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being challenged, Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of just expectations, Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of hard work, Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of change, Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being pushed from my comfort zone, Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being depended upon, Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of shouldering responsibility, Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being subject to the test, Deliver me, Jesus.

That the Father's will be done, rather than my own, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That great deeds may be asked of me for God's glory and my neighbors' good,

Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That I may suffer for the sake of the Gospel,

Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That my life may consist of crosses in order that I may imitate my savior,

Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That I might offer up the sufferings that befall me with courage for the salvation of souls,

Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That all false humility might be expunged from my soul,

Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That my light may shine before others, that they may see my good deeds and glorify my Father in heaven,

Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

Amen.

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Litany of Humility

O Jesus! meek and humble of heart, *hear me.*

From the desire of being esteemed, *deliver me, O Jesus.*

From the desire of being extolled, *deliver me, O Jesus.*

From the desire of being honored, *deliver me, O Jesus.*

From the desire of being praised, *deliver me, O Jesus.*

From the desire of being preferred to others, *deliver me, O Jesus.*

From the desire of being consulted, *deliver me, O Jesus.*

From the desire of being approved, *deliver me, O Jesus.*

From the fear of being humiliated, *deliver me, O Jesus.*

From the fear of being despised, *deliver me, O Jesus.*

From the fear of suffering rebukes, *deliver me, O Jesus.*

From the fear of being calumniated, *deliver me, O Jesus.*

From the fear of being forgotten, *deliver me, O Jesus.*

From the fear of being ridiculed, *deliver me, O Jesus.*

From the fear of being wronged, *deliver me, O Jesus.*

From the fear of being suspected, *deliver me, O Jesus.*

That others may be loved more than I, *Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.*

That others may be esteemed more than I, *Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.*

That, in the opinion of the world, others may increase and I may decrease,

Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be chosen and I set aside, *Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.*

That others may be praised and I unnoticed, *Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.*

That others may be preferred to me in everything, *Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.*

That others may become holier than I, provided that I may become as holy as I should,

Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.





How to Lead a Small Group Session

A small group session is an opportunity for a group to gather and discuss their thoughts, questions, and takeaways from a shared conversation that begins and ends with prayer. The task of a small group leader is to facilitate and direct the conversation, elicit contributions from all willing participants, resolve any conflicts that may arise, and summarize what is discussed.

As a small group leader, you are not asked to teach, but to make sure the conversation stays focused and respectful and includes all participants.

A small group is successful when there is meaningful discussion that helps people connect with each other and apply the concepts and themes to their daily life. You do not have to cover 100 percent of the material or questions. This is a framework for you to build upon that best meets the needs of the group you are leading.

General Tips to Lead a Small Group Session

Review and reflect before the session. As the small group discussion leader, make sure you review and reflect on the reading/video ahead of the session to familiarize yourself with the content.

Bring pens and paper. Consider providing paper and writing implements for the participants.

Ask questions that invite the participants to reflect on their experience. These small groups are designed for reflection, not a quiz on the content. Avoid yes-or-no questions unless you have a thought-provoking follow-up question. Make it comfortable for people to share their personal stories, but don't try to force them to do so.

Listen well. To facilitate a discussion, a leader must understand what everyone is saying. Sometimes it is easy to begin formulating your own response while another person is speaking, but that can compromise how well you are listening.

Rephrase, repeat, summarize, clarify. Together with listening skills, use these techniques to ensure each contribution to the discussion is heard and understood. Sometimes rephrasing a participant's idea to a sentence or two will help others in the room understand his or her contribution.

Summarizing the course of the discussion occasionally will also help ensure that everyone processes what has been said as a group and encourage them to take the discussion to the next level.

Include all participants. In any group discussion, some members will speak up willingly, perhaps even dominating the conversation, while others will tend to be quiet. Not everyone processes information the same way or at the same speed. Some may need you to encourage them to share. Respect those who take time to process and who may not be as inclined to share.

Adapt the questions. Be aware throughout the small group discussion that the people in the group might be in diverse vocations or different stages in their lives. In such instances, adapt the question or encourage the participants to adapt their reflections accordingly.

Return to questions later if the answer is not known. If a particular question arises in a session involving Church teaching and the correct answer is not known, you can simply state you will ask your chaplain or pastor, or look to the Catechism, for clarification and share the answer during the next session.

Keep emotional discipline and mediate conflict. Some topics can be sensitive, so be prepared to diffuse anger and redirect the discussion in a constructive way. Diffuse the situation and help the disputing members find common ground or principles. If necessary, simply table the issue that is causing the tensions and move along to a new topic.



Know when it's time to advance the discussion. Moving a discussion forward too soon can lead to missing some good observations or contributions, but keeping a discussion going on too long can make the session boring or repetitive. Be mindful of how the discussion is progressing; when it seems to stall, it's time to move it forward.

Seek help when necessary. Sometimes, questions and situations occur that require outside assistance. A participant might have a particularly difficult question, require fraternal correction, or argue against Church teaching. In situations like this, it is best to talk to the participant out of the group setting. Most importantly, remember that it is best to reach out to your pastor for help in a situation you are uncomfortable with.

End with an invitation. If there are more group sessions to come, re-invite the members of the group and remind them of the date and time. These personal invitations offer the small group another opportunity to develop their faith. An invitation is especially important following your last small group.

The Three Elements of Cor

PRAYER – LIFTING OUR HEARTS AND MINDS TO GOD

Through prayer, we encounter Christ and animate our faith and relationship with him. We must first know Jesus before we can share him with our families and communities.

Shared time in prayer will help men focus their minds and hearts on God and give depth and life to formation and fraternal brotherhood. Like all relationships, prayer requires commitment and consistency. Consider praying the rosary or spending time in Eucharistic Adoration.

FORMATION – BECOMING LIKE CHRIST

As disciples of Christ, the goal of Catholic formation is to become like Christ, taking on his character and virtue, his life of prayer, and his mission. He is the model of holiness.

Formation is life long and requires an intentional commitment. Alongside prayer, formation helps increase our knowledge and love of God and of neighbor. Intentional and structured times of formation help direct fraternity toward the shared pursuit of Christ, of holiness, and a life of faith and missionary discipleship. Formation requires the animation of prayer and the accountability of fraternity.

FRATERNITY – CHRIST-CENTERED BROTHERHOOD

Fraternity is not just friendship or hanging out, it is a true brotherhood centered on Christ. This type of brotherhood has depth and trust, where men sharpen one another and accompany each other as disciples of Christ.

Brotherhood made up of Christ-centered friendships is necessary for men to grow in holiness, as leaders, and as missionary disciples. Like prayer and formation, fraternity must be intentional, requires proximity and consistency, and the shared mission of evangelization.



To learn more about Cor,
visit www.kofc.org/cor



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