

The vineyard churches™ The vineyard person

This is a description that John Wimber used when he wanted to explain some of the important aspects of what the Vineyard was about – not so much the movement as a whole but the local church. Because he and Anaheim Vineyard are effectively our spiritual grandparents we need to remind ourselves sometimes of our family history and values.

We call this figure the Vineyard Person. This does not mean you as an individual. Nor is it a full statement of what we believe “church” means. The Vineyard Person is a simple reminder of our family history and values and the things that direct us as we move ahead. It purely symbolises something of what the local Vineyard is all about.



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This article was originally produced by David Flowers at Wharfedale Vineyard (Leeds) in 2007.

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All bible verses are quoted using the New International Version translation of the Bible unless stated otherwise.

Our Foundation

We are church that is founded on the Word of God. We are evangelicals, which means we believe the bible to be inspired by the Holy Spirit.

2 Timothy 3:16 *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."*

The books that make up the Old and New Testaments are our final and absolute authority, the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

What the bible describes is the story of God, the story of his Kingdom and hence an understanding of his Kingdom is essential to our foundations.

Matthew 4:17 & 23. *"From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near... Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people."*

We can see the activity of God in his works – these are a taste today of that which is to come when Jesus returns. We understand these works by the illumination of the word of God in the bible. Illumination and illustration, words and works. Learning and doing. Tell and show.

Worship

Luke 10:27 *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"*

Worship is our highest priority. One of our two main emphases. By worship we mean living lives that are subservient to the purposes and person of God. Living in such a way as to bring glory to God.

That is seen in our daily lives – the way we deal with other people, clients, patients, the boss, pupils, husband and wife, children, parents and so on.

It is seen in the way that we handle our money, how we behave sexually, how we party, how we do our jobs, the language that comes out of our mouths.

We also worship when we pray, when we meditate on the bible, when we pray for each other, when we heal the sick and cast out demons, when we feed the poor, care for the bereaved and the immigrant.

Characteristically, worship in the Vineyard is also contemporary worship music. The Vineyard is unique both in the way that the Lord has used it to bring a new vibrancy and meaningfulness to worship in church and also in its emphasis on intimacy.

The emphasis on worship and intimacy has its roots in Calvary Chapel [which led to the first Vineyard Church]. Bill Jackson describes his first encounter with this in Radical Middle,

"A girl came and sat on the stage with her guitar, closed her eyes, and went to be with Jesus. I had never seen anything like it before. A thousand people with their eyes closed, many with hands raised, singing and weeping to Jesus. No band, no flash, just broken people like me learning to love God and neighbour."

6 years later as Carol Wimber's small group learnt to worship they sang simple songs, many from Calvary Chapel, which were songs addressed to Jesus not about him. She reflects:

"It was during the songs with words addressed directly to God that they experience a more profound sense of his presence. When they gave him worship as a gift, not as the warm up

for the teaching but as an end in itself, an interesting thing happened. God brought his presence and ministered to them.”

Of course we will invest in building good quality musicianship and technology. However, the goal is not excellence but the worship of Jesus and knowing his presence. It may be excellent which would be great but that is not the main object of worship, he is.

Compassion

Matthew 9:36 *“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them...”*

Often we read that Jesus had compassion. Combined with obedience it seems to be the main driver behind his ministry. Worship leads to the presence of Jesus and he, by his Holy Spirit, brings compassion. Compassion is not just a feeling but an unction. A compulsion that goes beyond emotion.

When the Holy Spirit comes through worship he often leaves a deposit of compassion in the church. We express his heart of mercy and his demand for justice to a broken world. That is why so much of the social justice work done in this country emanates from the church.

The Vineyard has a way to go before we catch up with the Roman Catholics and the Salvation Army. But we expect the Lord to deposit compassion in our core being as a church and we expect to spend money, time and energy expressing it not just to each other but also outward into our community and beyond.

Expressions of this community of faith

These are not the only expressions or the only metaphors. But these are 4 key facets, which I would believe God would have us be mature in.

Army

This is not an army with guns that kills people. This is like a peace corps – an army that seeks to educate, build, heal and bring relief and peace. Our weapons are the power of God to heal and cast out demons, the good news that can rescue the lost, the hearts of compassion that feed the poor and care for the immigrant.

In doing this we claim back the territory unlawfully occupied by the enemy. One basic way we do this is through the Alpha Course, which we run throughout our Churches. It is a really good opportunity for you to introduce your friends and family to the good news about Jesus and a good place to get some basics sorted out before you get married or baptised or start leading a house group.

Isaiah 61 is titled: *Announce Freedom to All Captives*

The Spirit of God, the Master, is on me because God anointed me. He sent me to preach good news to the poor, heal the heartbroken, announce freedom to all captives, pardon all prisoners. God sent me to announce the year of his grace, a celebration of God's destruction of our enemies, and to comfort all who mourn, to care for the needs of all who mourn in Zion, give them bouquets of roses instead of ashes, messages of joy instead of news of doom, a praising heart instead of a languid spirit.

By the way we live our lives and by the power of the Spirit we aim be an army that declares a year of God's favour. An army that tells people, “there is more to life than this”.

School

At the Vineyard we seek to equip people for life. The best way to do that is to teach the bible and explore what the bible says about the various challenges of life.

2 Timothy 3: 14-17 *“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 1All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

The church is entrusted with this duty, to teach and train the people of God and help them as they seek to learn what it means to follow Jesus day by day. We also aim to teach people to share their faith, pray for the sick, give good counsel, lead others and so on.

My [David Flowers] early experience of the Vineyard was highly influenced by this. I learnt more about my business and how to lead people from the training I received in the church than I did on many courses and seminars in the secular world.

This does not mean, as you will have observed, that all we do is sit in classrooms and listen to a teacher talking. Some of it is like that, as now, but we try and use as many different forms of learning as possible.

Multi media, lecture format, discussion, small groups, art & craft, activity based learning, story telling. In person, through the web site, through reading and listening.

Our style is not to tell people what to think but to share our personal convictions and then help others make up their own minds as they take their thoughts and questions to God.

Hospital

Sadly but inevitably, many of us come to Jesus in a poor state. If you have recently decided to follow Jesus then there is often a great deal that needs treatment. Even if you have followed him for many years there are often hurts and damage that need his forgiving and healing touch.

Although our sin is forgiven at the cross, where Jesus died for us, it may take some time to deal with the consequences of sin in our lives or with the consequences of hurt done to us by another's sin. Being in this community of faith and building relationship with people in a small group allows the reality of Jesus' sacrifice for us and for the power of the Spirit to cleanse and transform us.

Matthew 9: 12 & 13. Jesus said, *“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ... I have come not to call the righteous but sinners.”*

The process of sanctification, becoming more like Jesus may take a lifetime but the “hospitalisation” required for restoration from the effects of sin is hopefully but for a season.

Community – also referred to as ‘House’

In the New Testament one of the writers, Paul, often uses the metaphor of a building - 1 Corinthians 3 10-17 for example.

Another is Ephesians 2:21-22. *“In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”*

This is the fruit of the work of Jesus on the cross. We are rescued and become bricks in this building. We are here and being built into a home by no other power than the saving grace of God. He is establishing a home, building it brick by brick, wall by wall, wing by wing and you can take your place here by virtue of his merciful invitation and by his death on the cross. Thus we are able to be part of this spiritual house of God.

One of the things we do as a spiritual house and to strengthen the house is to pray and intercede.

Church Planting

The arms signify our desire to reach out to the wider Body of Christ.

The Vineyard is a multiplication movement and has been from the very beginning. John Wimber introduced the idea in his first church through house groups and the Vineyard he inherited had already started out planting other churches.

This is modelled on Paul in the New Testament. He went from place to place planting churches. He would identify leaders and release them to go and do the same.

Ephesians 4:11-12. *"It was he [Jesus] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up..."*

We are part of Vineyard Churches UK and Ireland and seek to work with them (we give them 5% of our income for this purpose) to plant new churches. We also want to see leaders emerge from the Vineyard here and be equipped to go and plant new churches in new areas.

This is one way in which we reach out to the wider Body of Christ. The other is through Church Development.

Church Development

We seek to obey Jesus major commission to us.

Matthew 28:19-20. *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."*

This is not something we do on our own. As we often say, in the stew that is the whole church, the Vineyard is maybe just the turnip. We give our bit of flavour to the whole stew but we are not the whole stew, maybe not the tastiest bit either, but we have our part to play.

In the Vineyard here that works itself out in three main ways:

1. We seek to maintain unity.

John 17:21. *"...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you..."*

It is hard to do this sometimes when we look at other churches that have different practices and different beliefs to ours. Indeed some are so different as to be almost offensive to our way of thinking. We need to affirm what we can in an open and honest way and keep our criticism to ourselves whilst not pretending that differences do not exist.

In [Wharfedale Vineyard] Leeds in particular we work with the local Churches Together group, to share resources and work alongside each other in various events.

We regularly invite local ministers to teach and I [David Flowers] speak at other churches from time to time.

[Alison & David Flowers] are close to other Churches in Leeds and although we are very different churches we have much in common, not least a passion to build the Kingdom of God in Leeds.

Wherever we find ourselves ministering we will seek to build healthy, positive relationships with the local churches characterised by service and generosity.

2. We will call the Church back to Christ.

As humans we have a tendency to try and take ownership of the church. This is our church we say. This is my ministry. Well it isn't. It is his church and it is all his ministry.

It doesn't matter how long you have been here, how much money you give, how hard you work or even if you were dedicated or baptised here. It is still his church as are all the churches in this region as are all churches everywhere on the planet.

3. Ministry of the Holy Spirit

One of the tensions in the church worldwide is the understanding and visibility of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In other words the use of the spiritual gifts to facilitate the work of Jesus today.

Many other churches move to one end of the spectrum or the other – either the gifts are embarrassing and should be contained within a private sphere where they will not cause a mess. At the other end of the spectrum is the emphasis on the gifts to the exclusion of good thinking and practical activity.

In the Vineyard we aim for the “radical middle”. We want to release the empowering and gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church at large. Our style is to take the hype and mysticism out of some of the hairier expressions we see and instead minister the gifts in power but simply, with loving hearts and seeking to edify and build up the community of faith.

Jesus the Head of the Body & Making Disciples and Equipping the Saints

Colossians 1:18. *“When it comes to the church, he organises and holds it together, like a head does a body.”* (The Message)

Jesus gives us our aim and focus. He organises us, holds us together. Earlier we looked at the first bit of the great commission, which is his overarching command to us. The rest of it reads:

Matthew 28:18-20. *“Go and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all that I have commanded you.”* (The Message)

Most churches require their people to attend services, assent to a creed of some sort, serve somewhere in a voluntary capacity, give some money – gather, believe, serve, give. Those are all good things but they don't address the main challenge facing us: this is to tell people about Jesus and then train them in how to live and tell others the same thing.

The aim of the Vineyard is to enable people to gather, believe, serve and give but our particular emphasis is to train and equip also.