

# **Vineyard History, Theological Statement, & What It Means To Be A Christian**

## ***History of the Vineyard Movement***

The Vineyard began in 1974 as a small Bible study in Los Angeles. It quickly grew making it necessary to start other groups and Sunday service called The Vineyard. In the next few years, thousands of people received Christ, or various other kinds of ministry, during the Sunday service as well as in the small groups, which met in homes. Shortly after that, many went out to start other Vineyard churches in California, each having the emphasis on worship, relationships, healing, and training.

In the spring of 1982, John Wimber and several other pastors joined with the Vineyard. A short time later it became clear that God had called John to oversee, pastor, train, and encourage the other pastors under him.

In 1987 the various Vineyard churches formed a formal church association called the Association of Vineyard Churches (AVC). The churches are self-governing, but are overseen and encouraged on a voluntary basis by Pastoral Overseers. While the numbers of churches continue to increase, God has shown us not to seek to build the Vineyard, but instead to seek His Kingdom and to build His Church. He has given us the charge to bless what He is blessings, to love what He loves, and to give ourselves away freely.

Note: John Wimber's personal story is available on the video, "I'm A Fool For Christ. Who's Fool Are You?"

# ***History of Vineyard Gilbert Community Church***

## **Founded in 1988**

Vineyard Gilbert Community Church met for the first time in February of 1988. The church was founded by Jack Moraine as a nondenominational church plant called “East Valley Worship Center” and was affiliated with The Valley Cathedral in Phoenix, Arizona until 1995, when the church was adopted into the Vineyard movement and became known as Vineyard Christian Fellowship Gilbert. Today, in 2022, we are referred to as Vineyard Gilbert Community Church.

## **Meeting Places & Growth**

The church began with about 12 people in a small group and grew to around 80 while meeting at the Hilton Hotel in Mesa, Arizona. From the Hilton the church moved into rented facilities in Fiesta Tech Center, an industrial park in Gilbert, in 1990. The church stayed in these rented facilities for five and a half years and grew to around 120 people.

The church then purchased land at our current location (601 S. Cooper Rd. in Gilbert) and built a worship and classroom facility which was occupied on the first Sunday in August of 1995 (the same year East Valley Worship Center became Vineyard Christian Fellowship Gilbert) and grew quickly to over 200 people.

In January of 2003, one of our sister churches (East Valley Vineyard in Mesa, AZ) merged with our congregation. In July of 2003 we completed a 1500 square foot lobby expansion of our original building and finished construction of a second building (a 6500 square foot classroom/gym facility) on our property. Additional parking and site improvements were also added.

## **Values**

Throughout our church’s existence we have been committed to a number of core values. Things like dynamic worship, the importance of healthy relationships and service to one another, a de-emphasis of religious form, ministry by the whole church and not just by paid professionals, an open, informal style, and a strong desire for spiritual reality.

God has done many miraculous things in the past, but we feel the best is yet to come.

## **Our Structure**

*“Structure serves us, we don’t serve the structure.”*

No human being can function without a skeleton. A church body is no different. We need a structure to function effectively. In the Vineyard, we have an approach to structure and organization. We believe that the organization of the church should serve the organism of the church. In other words, we need enough organization to hold God’s activity, but the structure should never take precedence over God’s movement or be a substitute for God’s activity. Thus, we seek to maintain as little structure as possible to get the job done. We seek structures that enhance rather than stifle ministry and relationships.

Daily decisions on running the church are made by the pastoral staff. Vineyard Gilbert Community Church is governed by a church board under our bylaws. The church board is led by our Senior Pastor. Major financial decisions must be approved by our church board.

The Vineyard complies with all national and local laws. We are legally considered a tax-exempt, not-for-profit organization. All contributions made to Vineyard Gilbert Community Church, are tax-deductible. We have complied with all state laws regarding our articles of incorporation and bylaws.

## ***Theological Statement***

**We believe** that God is the Eternal King. He is an infinite, unchangeable Spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, goodness, justice, power and love. From all eternity he exists as the One Living and True God in three persons of one substance, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, equal in power and glory.

**We believe** that God's kingdom is everlasting. From His throne, through His Son, His eternal Word, God created, upholds and governs all that exist: the heavenly places, the angelic hosts, the universe, the earth, every living thing and mankind. God created all things very good.

**We believe** that Satan, originally a great, good angel, rebelled against God, taking a host of angels with him. He was cast out of God's presence and, as usurper of God's rule, established a counterkingdom of darkness and evil on the earth.

**We believe** that God created mankind in His image, male and female for relationship with Himself and to govern the earth. Under the temptation of Satan, our original parents fell from grace, bringing sin, sickness and God's judgment of death to the earth. Through the fall, Satan and his demonic hosts gained access to God's good creation. Creation now experiences the consequences and effects of Adam's original sin. Human beings are born in sin, subject to God's judgment of death and captive to Satan's kingdom of darkness.

**We believe** that God did not abandon His rule over the earth which He continues to uphold by His providence. In order to bring redemption, God established covenants which revealed His grace to sinful people. In the covenant with Abraham, God bound Himself to His people, Israel, promising to deliver them from bondage to sin and Satan and to bless all the nations through them.

**We believe** that as King, God later redeemed His people by His mighty acts from bondage in Egypt and established His covenant through Moses, revealing His perfect will and our obligation to fulfill it. The law's purpose is to order our fallen race to make us conscious of our moral responsibility. By the work of God's Spirit, it convicts us of our sin and God's righteous judgment against us and brings us to Christ alone for salvation.

**We believe** that when Israel rejected God's rule over her as King, God established the monarchy in Israel and made an unconditional covenant with David, promising that his heir would restore God's kingdom reign over His people as Messiah forever.

**We believe** that in the fullness of time, God honored His covenants with Israel and His prophetic promises of salvation by sending His only Son, Jesus, into the world. Conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin, Mary, as fully God and fully man in one person, empowered by the Holy Spirit, inaugurating God's kingdom reign on the earth, overpowering the reign of Satan by resisting temptation, preaching the good news of salvation, healing the sick, casting out demons and raising the dead. Gathering His disciples, He reconstituted God's people as His Church to be

instrument of His kingdom. After dying for the sins of the world, Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day, fulfilling the covenant of blessing given to Abraham.

In His sinless, perfect life, Jesus met the demands of the law and in His atoning death on the cross, He took God's judgment for sin which we deserve as lawbreakers. By His death on the cross He disarmed the demonic powers.

The covenant with David was fulfilled in Jesus' birth from David's house, His Messianic ministry, His glorious resurrection from the dead, His ascent into heaven and His present rule at the right hand of the Father. As God's Son and David's heir, He is the eternal Messiah-King, advancing God's reign throughout every generation and throughout the whole earth today.

**We believe** that the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Church at Pentecost in power, baptizing believers into the Body of Christ and releasing the gifts of the Spirit to them. The Spirit brings the permanent indwelling presence of God to us for spiritual worship, personal sanctification, building up the Church, gifting us for ministry, and driving back the kingdom of Satan by the evangelization of the world through proclaiming the word of Jesus and doing the works of Jesus.

**We believe** that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Jesus Christ and that He is our abiding Helper, Teacher, and Guide.

**We believe** in the infilling or empowering of the Holy Spirit, often a conscious experience, for ministry today. We believe in the present ministry of the Spirit and in the exercise of all of the biblical gifts of the Holy Spirit. We practice the laying on of hands for the empowering of the Spirit, for healing, and for recognition and empowering of those whom God has ordained to lead and serve the Church.

**We believe** that the Holy Spirit inspired human authors of the Holy Scriptures so that the Bible is without error in the original manuscripts. We receive the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments as our final, absolute authority, the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

**We believe** that the whole world is under the domination of Satan and that all people are sinners by nature and choice. All people, therefore, are under God's judgment. Through the preaching of the Good News of Jesus and the Kingdom of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, God regenerates, justifies, adopts and sanctifies through Jesus by the Spirit all who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. By this they are released from Satan's domain and enter into God's kingdom reign.

**We believe** in the one, holy, universal Church. All who repent of their sins and confess Jesus as Lord and Savior are regenerated by the Holy Spirit and form the living body of Christ, of which He is the head and all are members.

**We believe** that Jesus Christ committed two ordinances to the Church: water baptism and the Lord's Supper. Both are available to all believers.

**We believe** that God's kingdom has come in the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, that it continues to come in the ministry of the Holy Spirit through the Church, and that it will be consummated in the glorious, visible and triumphant appearing of Christ in His return to the earth as King. After Christ returns to reign, He will bring about the final defeat of Satan and all of his minions and works, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment and the eternal blessing of the righteous and eternal conscious punishment of the wicked. Finally, God will be all in all and His kingdom, His rule and reign, will be fulfilled in the new heavens and the new earth, recreated by His mighty power, in which righteousness dwells and in which He will forever be worshipped.

# ***What Does It Mean To Be A Christian?***

*Many people live their lives without ever contemplating the “why” of life. They go through the motions of life year after year with no idea why they are alive. Probably, the most basic question a person can ask is, “What is the meaning of my life?”*

Everyone wants fulfillment with a sense of purpose. People try to find this in different ways:

- Possessions
- Pleasure
- Prestige
- Power

However, real fulfillment comes from understanding my purpose

## ***Why am I here?***

God made me the object of His love.

*Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)*

*But God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)*

*Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will. (Ephesians 1:4-5)*

From reading the above verses, the assumption I can draw about God’s love is that God loves me!

God also made me to be in loving relationship with others.

God created us with a purpose: To live and to be loved by Him and others. Why doesn’t this system work very well? Why do people feel unloved, alone and without purpose?

## ***What is my problem?***

A common attitude in America is, “It’s my life and I’ll do as I please.”

We have a natural tendency to ignore God and to serve self. Our basic nature is to live with a selfish attitude.

The Bible calls this attitude sin.

*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. (1John 1:8)*

*All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)*

Sin separates us from God and from others. It causes us to hide from Him and to selfishly use others to fulfill our own purposes.

People often try many different ways of coping when they have problems...before turning to God, such as:

- relationships
- work
- substances
- money
- other activities

## ***What is the only solution?***

*Jesus said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)*

God came to earth as a human being in order to restore broken relationships with Himself and with others. Sin requires “payment,” and Jesus was the only perfect sacrifice, adequate to pay the price for man’s sin. Our sin problem could only be solved through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is our only solution.

**The Good News: Jesus has already taken care of your sin problem.**

*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)*

*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)*

From looking at the above verses...

What is the price of sin? **DEATH**

Who provided the payment? **JESUS**

Because of God's great love, He took the initiative to provide for our restoration from sin. Now it is up to each of us to either accept or reject what He has done for us.

**The first step** in becoming a member of the Vineyard Gilbert Community Church is you must personally receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. In other words, you must become a follower of Jesus.

## ***The Symbols of Salvation: Baptism and Communion***

Jesus asked His followers to participate in remembering His death and resurrection in two ways: believer's baptism and Holy Communion. These two sacraments symbolize and demonstrate the foundation of our faith: that Jesus Christ died and rose again as a sacrifice for our sins.

### ***Baptism***

#### ***Why should I be baptized?***

1. To follow Jesus' example.

*At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. (Mark 1:9)*

2. It is an act of obedience to the command of Jesus.

*Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20)*

## ***The meaning of baptism***

1. It is a visual picture of Jesus Christ's burial and resurrection.

*...having been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead. (Colossians 2:12)*

2. It is a visual picture of my new life as a Christian.

*We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Romans 6:4)*

**NOTE:** Baptism does not make you a believer, it shows that you already believe. Baptism does not save you; only your faith in Jesus Christ does that. Baptism could be likened to a wedding ring. It's the outward symbol of the commitment you made in your heart.

## ***How We Baptize***

At VGCC, we baptize by immersion, in accordance with the biblical meaning of the word baptize, "dipping."

After publicly assenting to one's faith, you may request to be baptized, or it may be suggested to you as the next important step in your life as a follower of Jesus. Baptism may take place at any time during the year in the church sanctuary. In addition, baptisms can also take place within the context of home fellowship groups with a pastor or home group leader doing the baptizing.

## ***When should a person be baptized?***

Simply, a person should be baptized after they have committed their life to Christ.

*Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. (Acts 2:41)*

## ***Common questions regarding baptism***

There is a brochure available that gives information and answers most questions pertaining to baptism.

1. What about children?

At VGCC we wait to baptize children until they are old enough to believe and understand the true meaning of salvation. This means different ages for different children.

2. What about babies?

We practice infant dedication during a regular Sunday service. During this service, parents agree to partner with God and the church in committing to raise their child in the nurture and instruction of the Bible. It is their endeavor that their child would know Jesus Christ as personal Savior at the earliest age possible.

3. What should I wear?

We suggest that you wear modest shorts and a dark colored T-shirt.

4. Will I have to say anything at the baptism?

You may be given the opportunity to share a short testimony of your faith in Jesus Christ, but it is not required that you say anything. The person who is baptizing you will probably pray over you after they baptize you.

## **Communion**

### **What is communion?**

*For I received from the Lord what which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed too bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. (1Corinthians 11:23-29)*

Participation in communion is remembering Christ's sacrifice, and our anticipation of His return.

### ***Who should participate in communion?***

Communion is for everyone who has made a response to Christ in their heart.

At VGCC, we believe communion is to recognize and remember Christ's death and resurrection. Therefore, it must be an individual attitude of the heart as well as a corporate sacrament. We offer an "open table" where individuals are encouraged to make their own personal response.

### ***How do I prepare myself for communion?***

Our thoughts and attitude should be in remembrance of Christ and in reverence toward Him as we take communion.

1. Examine yourself (vv. 27-28)
  - a. 1 John 1:9
  - b. Psalm 139:23-24
2. Communion is for Christians only. Otherwise, you cannot "judge the body rightly."
3. Remember and renew your commitments to Jesus (v. 25)
  - a. Covenant means agreement.
    - i. When two people covenant together, it means an exchanging of lives.
    - ii. Jesus did that with us.
  - b. What was your part of the agreement?
  - c. Remember and renew those during communion.

### ***When and how often should we observe communion?***

Jesus never said when or how often believers should participate in communion. As a church, we normally take communion on the first Sunday of each month, and at other special times during the year.

# **Vision, Values And Priorities**

## *Our Vision*

Jesus gave His vision statement to us in Matthew 28:18-20. We accept that as our mandate, and our vision statement.

## *Our Mission*

“Making, Maturing and Mobilizing Disciples”

## *Our Values*

*We value the pursuit of God.* We are hungry to know God's presence, hear His voice and follow hard after Him. (Psalm 63:1-3)

*We value Christ likeness.* We desire that through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus' love, mercy, grace, truth, purity, power, and integrity would shine through all that we are and do. (John 14:16; 13:15)

*We value being Spirit led.* We honor Jesus as our Head and the Holy Spirit as our Counselor. We seek to be responsive to the Holy Spirit in life and ministry. (I John 4:13; Gal. 5:22-25)

*We value prayer.* We believe that prayer is essential, because it is our primary means of communication with God, and because it is one of God's primary means of accomplishing His purposes in the world.

*We value discipleship.* Our goal is first to grow as disciples of Christ ourselves and then to make disciples of others. (Matthew 28:18-20)

*We value the Kingdom of God.* Our desire is to move in the signs of the present fulfillment of the kingdom, invoking the Spirit's powerful presence, ministering through the Spirit's gifts, and seeing God heal and work wonders. (Mark 1:14-15)

*We value the mercy of God.* We believe that mercy is fundamental to all that God does in salvation. We, therefore, desire to extend mercy to one another and to all to whom we minister. (Colossians 3:12-13)

*We value integrity.* It is important to us to speak the truth, deal honestly, and live uprightly. (Ephesians 4:15)

*We value servant leadership.* We believe that Christ has put significant leadership authority in the hands of the Pastor and associates. Our goal is to exercise that authority with humility, selflessness, grace, care for the sheep and sincere desire to build up the body of Christ. (Mark 10:37, 24-45)

*We value the individual*, single or married, and we want to enable and support mature relationships and family growth.

*We value unity*. We are convinced that all who belong to Christ are one in His body, the Church. Our goal is to maintain unity by honoring all who call on Jesus' name and by seeking reconciliation with all parts of the Church. (John 17:21-23, Acts 4:12)

*We value collegiate relationship*. We are honored by every person whom God adds to the Vineyard. We desire to work together to build the church through maintaining mutual respect, open communication, determined cooperation, and believing and speaking the best about each Other. (I Corinthians 13:4-7)

*We value reality*. We desire to walk in the Spirit and see real supernatural works of God. We also desire to function on the natural plane based on God's leading in conjunction with excellent, rational thinking~ (James 1:5)

*We value simplicity*. We Wish to do nothing 'for religious effect' but rather to operate in natural, low key, 'non-hype' patterns. We desire to do the ministry of Christ with joy. (Philippians 4:4)

*We value being culture current*. Our goal is to develop an atmosphere of ease and to speak, act, and dress in ways to which our culture can respond positively. For example, we reflect this value through worship music that is of a contemporary style. (I Corinthians 9:19-23)

*We value the family*. When God calls people, He calls them as families-as children, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, husbands and wives. We believe that Vineyard should build up and not compete with family life. We also believe that families should be vehicles for the spread of God's kingdom. (Colossians 3:18-25)

# ***Priorities of VGCC***

## ***Worship***

Worship is an expression of our hearts toward God as shown through song and praise. One of the Hebrew words for worship means “to turn toward to kiss.” God created man to worship Him, and He wants us to intimately give ourselves over to Him in our worship. As we do that, we are drawn into His presence and experience His touch in our lives.

Manny of the songs that we sing are written by people in the Vineyard and the emphasis of them is to sing to God and not just about God. As we do that, we are drawn into an ever-increasing intimacy with God our Father.

## ***The Bible***

We believe that the Bible is the written Word of God, Himself, and that it is absolutely reliable for all matters pertaining to life. We view the Bible as the “plumbline” by which we gauge our lives, and believe that God, through His Word, has given us the tools necessary to deal with any situation that may arise. We do not choose to debate the Bible, or to focus on questions concerning one translation over another. Instead, we choose to obey the simple understanding He has given us in a variety of translations.

## ***Training***

By training, we mean the process of equipping, teaching and discipling those who have chosen to follow Jesus. Our desire is to not only know the Word of God, but to also DO the Word of God. The Greek word for “disciple” means “to learn to do,” not “to learn to know.” James 1:22 says, “But prove yourselves doers of the Word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.” (NASB) Our overall vision for VGCC comes from Jesus words in Matthew 28, when he tells his disciples to “go into all the world and make disciples.” Paul further expounds this principle in Ephesians 4:11-13, when he instructs the church to “equip the saints” for the work of ministry. Teaching the Bible in a simple and practical way is important to us. Very often our teachings will be followed up by the exhortation: “Now, let’s go and do what it says.”

## ***Fellowship / Community***

Fellowship with other believers on a regular basis is essential to our walk with the Lord. We want to help facilitate relationships between people so that they will build intimate relationships with others in the Body. We don’t believe that these intimate relationships can be adequately nurtured in a once a week church service setting. Therefore, we have

small groups which meet together in different homes and locations throughout the East Valley area. We also have some small groups that meet at the church on designated nights and times. These groups provide an opportunity to become better acquainted with one another, worship the Lord together, and pray for each other's needs.

There are small group brochures in the foyer of the church with listings of the groups that are currently available. Some groups allow children and provide for childcare, while others do not. Being in a group is extremely important to your growth in Christ and is a major value here at the Vineyard. If you feel that God is calling you to be part of this church, please take the initiative to get involved with a small group.

## ***Ministry***

Ministering to others is another priority for us. Jesus Christ commanded us, as the church, to do the very works He did (John 14:12). We seek to do that by reaching out to those who are in need or are hurting physically, emotionally and spiritually.

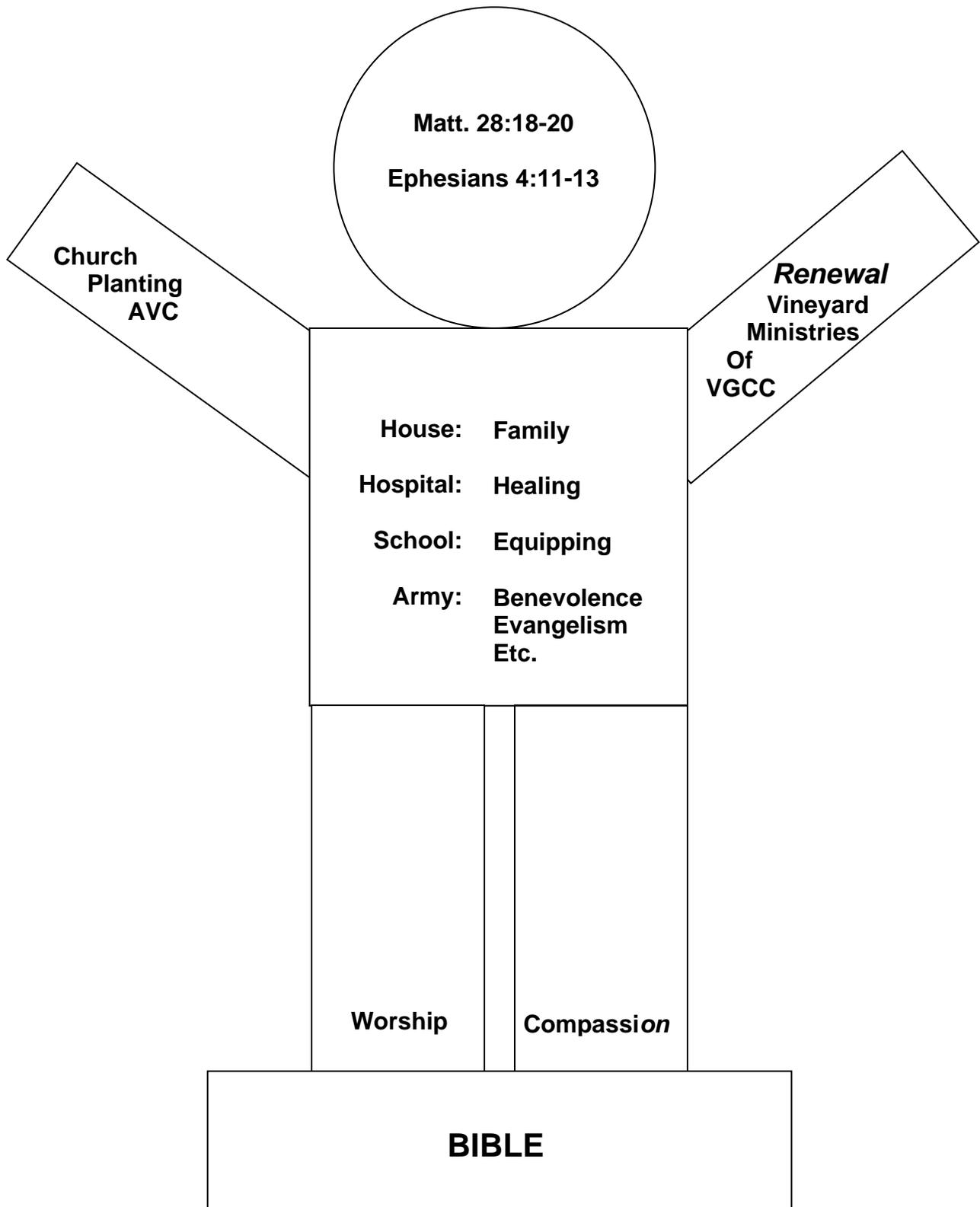
The ministry was not intended to be the performance of a few professionals. Jesus meant for every Christian from the first day he becomes a follower, to be involved with ministering to others. Therefore, we encourage all those who are committed to VGCC to begin participating in the different ministry opportunities we have. That includes everything from serving the poor and underprivileged in our community, to praying for the sick, to feeding the hungry, and everything in between.

In order for people to become effective in ministering to others, they need to be trained. We offer various training opportunities and seminars throughout the year for this purpose. This training includes: praying for the sick, ministering to the demonized, ministering to hurting and wounded marriages, ministering to children, ministering to the poor and homeless, and many others. Being in a small group becomes the perfect laboratory for learning and practicing ministry skills.

## ***Sending***

Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). He accomplishes that salvation through the witness of His people. There are over 150 million unchurched people in the United States at the present time. That means there is an enormous mission field for churches like the Vineyard here in the U.S. We believe that God has called us to be an influence for Jesus Christ in the East Valley of the greater Phoenix metropolitan area. We aim to do this by reaching out to those who are not yet followers of Jesus, by helping renew existing churches, and by planting new churches. We also believe that God has called us to extend the ministry of Jesus to the nations of the world. We send people on short term mission trips, train leaders, offer conferences on church renewal, support full-time missionaries, and help plant churches around the world.

# ***The Vineyard Man***



## ***Our Foundation: The Holy Bible***

What we stand on

The Vineyard is founded on the Word of God. We are first and foremost evangelicals who believe the Bible to be the inerrant Word of God as it was originally written and inspired. As such, it is the standard for our faith and practice and the yardstick by which we measure all of our society. It is the principle resource from which we draw our understanding of what the church is to be about.

## ***The Legs: Building the Local Body***

Worship and Compassion

We are building a body; a local expression of the church. As such, we are linked to the church throughout the world. The Vineyard is gifted by God with two major emphases: Worship and compassion.

We believe that we live to worship God and rescue men. We practice our worship throughout the week in a subservient attitude towards the person and purposes of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is worthy of our worship, and we do so by singing songs, praying prayers, meditating on the Scripture, congregating and building one another up in fellowship, as well as by healing the sick, casting out demons, ministering to the poor, the bereaved, the widowed, etc. Our worship expresses love upward toward God and outward toward man.

Worship leads us to compassion, the second emphasis or “leg” the Lord had given us. Compassion in the New Testament was a work of the Spirit that precipitated or preceded a major portion of the miracles found in Scripture. Jesus was filled with compassion before He encouraged the apostles to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers. It was compassion that caused Him to preach the Sermon on the Mount, to raise the widow of Nain’s son from the dead, to heal the sick and the demonized. Compassion and obedience seems to be a primary motivation for everything He did.

We feel blessed at the Vineyard when God endues us with compassion. That is not to say that we think compassion dwells within us, like some human resource such as sympathy or empathy. Compassion is an unction of the Spirit that comes from time to time that motivates us to minister, and we follow Jesus’ example when we minister from hearts brimming over with compassion. However, we don’t only minister when we “feel” compassionate. We minister out of obedience. Compassion is not devoid of feelings, but it is more than feelings. Compassion is placed within the bowels of the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit and so reflects God’s heart or justice and mercy toward a broken world.

## ***The Torso: Four Facets of the Body***

We believe that God has called VCFG to express four facets of the Body of Christ. They are: the church as a House, Hospital, School, and Army. These are not the only Biblical metaphors one could use. Some count as many as sixty or more in the New Testament. These describe for us the ways we believe God wants us to mature, grow and operate as the Body of Christ.

### ***House (Family)***

We are called to be a house, a household, or family. This, of course, is the fruit of being born again and converted into the Body of Christ. We are in good standing as members of the family of God because of the finished work of Jesus on the cross. The work of Christ on our behalf (this plus nothing else) has established us in the Body of Christ and in the family of God. We are the spiritual household of God, and Christ is the foundation and cornerstone.

### ***Hospital***

At VGCC, we find that many who come to Christ arrive terribly wounded, either by their sin or the sins of others that have affected them. They need a significant amount of healing in the aftermath of their conversion experience. Though, “all things have become new in Christ,” the reality of yesterday’s pain oftentimes lingers. Our sins are forgiven at the cross, yet we sometimes do not deal adequately with sin’s effect in our lives. We need to allow the reality of the cross and the truth of the Scripture to expose the lies that continue to effect us. We need to cast our cares upon Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to cleanse and transform us. We find that many people who are in the family of God are also in need of special pastoral care. Though sanctification and spiritual growth is a life-long process, healing and “hospitalization” is hopefully but for a season. In reality, we are to be an emergency room for the broken and wounded.

### ***School***

At VGCC, we felt the need to provide a form of schooling to equip people for both life and ministry. First, we believe Scripture enjoins us to equip the saints, and so it makes sense as leaders to train them in basic ministry skills: teaching, counseling, evangelism, etc. But that is not the end. We must also equip people for life and teach them the kinds of things that would reflect the whole counsel of God relating to the nurture of their family, finances, vocations and social relations. The whole of life’s experiences ought to be, in one way or another, addressed by the gospel. The church is entrusted with the task of bringing God’s wisdom to bear in working out the issues of life, while leaving freedom for people to make choices and direct their lives as they respond to God’s Word and the Holy Spirit.

## ***Army***

Is there any question of a need for a mission-minded army of God in our dark era? We are a house, a hospital, and a school, but God also releases us into His work force to advance the reign of His kingdom in the lives of dying men and women. God sovereignly prepares us through our new birth in Christ, the ministry of His healing hand, and the equipping of pastors and leaders to do the work of the kingdom of God: preaching the gospel, healing the sick, caring for the poor, ministering to the hurting, etc.

## ***The Head of the Body: Our Aims***

The head of the Body is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is Jesus who gives us our aims and that is why we chose to position them here. Simply stated, our mission is to fulfill the Great Commission through evangelism and to equip, grow and mature a body of believers.

First is evangelism. We have found that people often confuse decisions with discipleship. Effective ministry in the local church requires not only catching, but cleaning the fish. We must not only harvest. We must also process the fruit we harvest. Fish left uncleaned and harvests not processed represent an incomplete picture of the evangelistic endeavor. We must disciple those who pray and make decisions for Christ.

The essential nature of equipping, touched on in the previous section related to the school, is to repair and prepare a people to do kingdom ministry. God has prepared good works for us to walk in; and He has set leadership in the Church to train us how to walk. But, unfortunately, a great deal of the body of Christ is underdeveloped in this regard. Many maintain some of the basic organizational disciplines. These are: attendance at most services, general assent to the creedal or doctrinal emphases, service in the local body and giving on a regular basis. These four practices qualify you for membership in almost any church in America. Yet none of the above truly represent the New Testament picture of the body of Christ in action. That is not to say that these practices are unimportant or that the early church didn't encourage them. The body should always gather, give, believe, and serve. But the body must be equipped to do more than minimum requirements for organizational membership. And this is where our training emphasis comes into play.

## ***The Arms of the Body: Our mission***

### ***Renewal***

Notice that our figure has two arms. The first is our renewal involvement (keep in mind that we're talking about the local church at VGCC). In renewal, the church (VGCC) has two priorities. The first is to encourage the body of Christ in unity (John 17:21). This is the most difficult command of God ever tried. It is very awkward to affirm believers in

Christ who have doctrine or aberrational practices that seem at variance from Scriptural norm. If we take seriously the commandment to love the brethren so that Jesus is communicated to the world in a wholesome way, we must learn to build bridges and make relationships with people who previously we were not able to relate to, and in some cases we didn't even like! One way, of course, is to affirm what we can in an open and honest way and keep our criticism to ourselves while not pretending that differences do not exist.

Secondly, we are called to minister and release the empowerment and gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Church at large. We are called to take the hype and mysticism out of much that has labeled the ministry of the Spirit today. Instead, we want to minister in power, simplicity and with a loving heart as we seek to edify the body through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the words of John Wimber, we want to be “naturally, supernatural” in ministry.

### ***Church Planting***

The other arm of our figure shows our linkage with the Association of Vineyard Churches (AVC) and our commitment to plant new churches. This will be done as the opportunities arise, and as leaders and finances are available, in cooperation with our national, regional and area plans. We thank God for linking us to a growing movement of churches being planted in the United States and around the world.

This introduces you to the basic vision of our local body at VGCC. Most of it came out of the crucible of interaction with Scripture, burdens of the Holy Spirit and occasions of God giving specific leading. God led us to establish a local church here at VGCC. This is local body has had its impact not only in our community, but across the nation and around the world. This is part of “who we are: and will remain the direction of “where we are going,” until Jesus leads otherwise.

## Chapter Three

# Small Groups & Ministry

## ***Why We Value Small Groups***

***Within all of us there is a deep-seated need to belong to a small group.***

Everyone needs a group where authentic love, acceptance, forgiveness and some fun can be experienced. The catch phrase nowadays is “community.” The biblical phrase is “fellowship.”

The longing for community has been placed in all of us by God. The creation account of Adam and Eve illustrates our fundamental need for relationship. In Genesis 2:18, 21, 22 it states:

*The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.*

***Jesus taught His disciples to think in terms of small groups.***

*Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach (Mark 3:13-14)*

The Apostles clearly understood the importance of believers doing life together. In fact, they wrote over fifty “one another” commands in the New Testament.

***The early church practiced this community of fellowship.***

They did this through two main venues: first, in the temple, and secondly, in the homes.

*Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ. (Acts 5:42)*

# ***What Are The Benefits Of Being Involved In A Small Group?***

## ***It's a wonderful place to receive love, acceptance and forgiveness.***

Sometimes the pressures of life can wear you down and it begins to seem like everyone is against you. Small groups can provide a place of shelter, a place where you can gather together with others who are on your side. It's great to know you can weekly go to someone's home and see some friendly faces.

Jesus said, *"Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."* Small groups are a place where you can be refreshed in God's love through worship and prayer and also experience the acceptance of others.

## ***It provides an excellent opportunity for pastoral care.***

The phrase, "Life is hard, but God is good," is so true. At one time or another, we all need to be healed from the hardships and pains of life. It is in our small groups that our front line of care takes place. Our small groups provide care in three different ways: crisis care, preventative care, and casual care.

1. Crisis care is when you are experiencing a major trauma.
2. Preventative care happens as you meet weekly with a handful of other believers who are committed to the same cause of glorifying God. In the process of building relationships with one another, opportunities arise to receive advice and prayer that may help keep you possible calamity or unnecessary harm.
3. Casual care is for the minor "boo-boos" of life that sometimes ding and bruise us.

## ***It's a fun place to celebrate the joys of life.***

Small groups, especially the ones we call Community Life Groups, are a wonderful place to play together, laugh together and celebrate together. Rejoicing together is an important aspect of our small groups. Proverbs 17:22 says, *"A joyful heart is good medicine."* Our groups are a place where we can let our hair down and have a good time.

***It promotes personal growth and ministry development.***

Without question, small groups are one of the greatest ways to experience discipleship and personal growth. Since small groups are a friendly and safe place, everyone is encouraged to learn, develop and use their gifts and talents for the kingdom of God.

## ***How Can You Become Involved In A Small Group?***

- 1. Check out our small group brochure in the foyer of the church or on the church website, and find one that fits your schedule and interest.***
- 2. Visit a group. If it feels right....GREAT. If not, then visit another group until you find one that will work for you.***
- 3. Once you find a group, jump in with both feet and enjoy the ride.***

## ***Our Approach To Ministry***

Our goal is to have hundreds of ministers. This means we want people to think of themselves as ministers.

Ministry is a word that describes something every Christian should do. The word “minister,” comes from the Latin word meaning servant. Ministry is serving others with the gifts and abilities God has given to you. Is ministry meant to be a full-time, paid job? NO! That is the exception rather than the rule. Again, pastors equip people to do the ministry. The people minister; the pastors and leaders equip.

### ***The benefits of ministry***

Benefits to you:

1. Keeps your faith alive.
2. You get to use and discover your spiritual gifts.
3. You need to be needed.
4. You need to have your life make a difference.

5. You need an opportunity to participate.
6. Provides an arena to develop relationships.
7. Affirmation and self-esteem.
8. Paradox of the Christian life: the more you give away life, the more you find life.  
The more you hold on, the less you have.

Benefits to others:

1. They need your ministry and your love.
2. They may be brought to salvation.
3. You may help to set someone free from lifelong problems.
4. You may help their families change their world.

Benefits to God:

1. Christ's example is honored.
2. God gets the glory.
3. A chance for God to display His wisdom, His power and His love.

## ***The costs of ministry***

Costs to you:

1. Giving your time
2. Giving your energy
3. Taking some risks
4. Spending time in prayer and preparation

The bottom line is this: ***IT'S WORTH IT***

## ***Our Approach To Evangelism***

The best form of evangelism (better than TV, tracts, street preaching, knocking on doors, bus ministry, etc.) is reaching out to people with the love of Jesus in natural ways through existing relationships (family, employment, neighbors).

Question: How were you led into a relationship with the Lord? Most people come to know Christ through someone they know and trust.

Fact: One out of four un-churched adults surveyed say they would definitely visit a church if someone invited them.

Application:

1. Be an inviter
2. Use a group meeting for a social activity and bring a friend.
3. Ask God, “Who can I invite to church or to a church event?”

VGCC employs many different strategies for reaching people with the good news of Christ’s life, death and resurrection. We firmly believe in the Apostle Paul’s mandate to use “all possible means” to save the lost. (1 Corinthians 9:22)

The chief means of evangelism we employ are:

1. **Bringing and Including:** Not everyone is a Billy Graham. But everyone can invite a friend, neighbor or family member to church (where they will hear the gospel) and include them in church social activities. The number one reason adults give for not visiting a church is “because no one invited me.”
2. **Friendship Evangelism:** The vast majority of people come to know Christ through a friend or family member. Vineyard is a great place to bring people who’ve already seen Christ through your friendship.
3. **Servant Evangelism:** Servant evangelism is a great way to let our community know the love of God in a practical, non-threatening way. We periodically give away cokes, water, wash windows, buy coffee at local coffee bars, and participate in other ways of letting people in our community know that God loves and cares for them.
4. **Vineyard Sponsored Events:** From time to time, we have special services and activities that are designed for guests and for intentionally helping people move closer to God. Some examples are: Vacation Bible School; Harvest Festival; Prison Ministry; Women’s breakfasts and events; various classes, seminars and concerts.

Many people have responded to the gospel and have been baptized through these kinds of events and activities at VGCC.

## Chapter Four

# Membership

## ***What Membership Does Not Mean at VGCC***

Membership in the Vineyard does not mean you are closing the door to ever go elsewhere.

Membership is not a marriage, but neither is it like choosing a restaurant.

Membership is not a prerequisite to opportunities.

### ***Six Specific Commitments***

- 1. Commitment to regular weekly attendance at VGCC.***
- 2. Commitment to becoming part of a small group at VGCC.***
- 3. Commitment to getting involved in a ministry at VGCC.***
- 4. Commitment to giving financially to God's work through VGCC.***

# ***What It Means To Be A Member***

The difference between attenders and members can be summed up in one word.

## ***COMMITMENT***

At VGCC, we recognize the need for formal membership. We ask you to commit to membership for four reasons.

1. A Biblical Reason: Christ is committed to the church...*Christ loved the church, and gave Himself up for her.* (Ephesians 5:25)
2. A Cultural Reason: It is an antidote to our society. We live in an age where many do not want to be committed to anything (a job, a marriage, our country). This attitude has even produced a generation of “church hoppers” and “church shoppers.” Membership swims against the current of America’s consumer religion. It is an unselfish decision. Commitment always builds character.
3. A Practical Reason: It defines who can be counted on. Every team must have a roster. Every school must have an enrollment. Every business has a payroll. Every army has an enlistment. Even our country takes a census and requires voter registration. Membership identifies our family.
4. A Personal Reason: It produces spiritual growth. The New Testament places a major emphasis on the need for Christians to be accountable to each other for spiritual growth. You cannot be accountable when you’re not committed to any specific church family.

# ***Membership Expectations***

## ***What is expected of me as a member?***

At VGCC, we never ask our members to do more than the Bible teaches. We only expect our members to do exactly what the Bible teaches every Christian to do. These responsibilities are as follows:

1. I will protect the **UNITY** of my church.
  - a. By acting in love toward other members
  - b. By refusing to gossip
  - c. By following the leaders

*So let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony, and on the growth of our fellowship together. (Romans 15:19 J. B. Phillips)*

*Live in complete harmony with each other, each with the attitude of Christ toward each other. (Romans 15: 5 The Living Bible)*

*Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be no advantage to you. (Hebrews 13:17 NIV)*

2. I will share the **RESPONSIBILITY** of my church.
  - a. By praying for its growth
  - b. By inviting the un-churched to attend
  - c. By warmly welcoming those who visit

*We always thank God for you and pray for you constantly. (1 Thessalonians 1:2 The Living Bible)*

Go out into the country, and urge anyone you find to come in, so that My House will be full. (Luke 14:23 The Living Bible)

*So, warmly welcome each other into the church, just as Christ so warmly welcomed you; then God will be glorified. (Romans 15:7 The Living Bible)*

3. I will serve the **MINISTRY** of my church.
  - a. By discovering my gifts and talents

- b. By being equipped to serve along side my leaders
- c. By developing a servant's heart
- d. By helping to equip others to the best of my knowledge, gifts, and abilities, for life and ministry

*Serve one another with the particular gifts God has given each of you... (1 Peter 4:10 J.B. Phillips)*

*(God gave)...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... (Ephesians 4:11-12 NIV)*

You may not know what areas you want to serve in yet. That's okay! The best thing to do is to try serving in several different ministries over the next year or so until you find one that you really enjoy, and that God seems to be gifting you for. The key is to begin right away. A moving vehicle is always easier to steer!

- 4. I will support the **TESTIMONY** of my church.
  - a. By attending faithfully, volunteering, and joining a small group
  - b. By living a godly life
  - c. By regular financial giving

*Let us not give up the habit of meeting together...but let us encourage one another... (Hebrews 10:25 NIV)*

*But whatever happens, make sure that your everyday life is worthy of the gospel of Christ. (Philippians 1:27 J. B. Phillips)*

*One every Lord's Day, each of you should put aside something from what you have earned during the week and use it for the offering. (1 Corinthians 16:2 The Living Bible)*

*A tenth of the produce of the land, whether grain or fruit, is the Lord's, and is holy. (Leviticus 27:30 The Living Bible)*

## ***What Must I Do To Join VGCC?***

We ask that you read all the information in this booklet carefully and prayerfully. After completing the Membership Class, if you desire to become a member of VGCC, please fill out the membership form and turn it in to the office or to a staff member. Welcome to Vineyard Gilbert Community Church, and thank you so much for attending the New Members Class.

# **A Hunger For God: The Birth of the Vineyard**

# A Hunger for God:

## *Birth of the Vineyard*

by Carol Wimber

*Carol Wimber, John Wimber's wife, was instrumental in the founding of the Vineyard Christian Fellowship of Anaheim, California. Here she tells the early story through her own experience.*

Shortly after John resigned as pastor of Our local church, Yorba Linda Friends Church, in 1974, I noticed changes in it that were unsettling to me. As an elder, teacher and board member, I was in a good position to observe congregational trends. I noticed the weaker members were leaving the church and church growth waned. I had to admit that our church, which stood for all we believed in and in which we were so proud of, was slipping away.

My first reaction to declining attendance was to try harder to maintain growth. I taught more Bible studies and Sunday school classes. I helped develop new and more effective Vacation Bible School programs. I gave it all I had.

By 1976, I was teaching women's Bible studies around Orange County, and I was beginning to feel confident about myself, though I was still disturbed about our local congregation. 'Lord,' I would ask in my prayers, 'what's wrong with the church? Why are so many people wandering away now that John is no longer pastor?' I wasn't prepared for how God would answer my prayers.

### **A Disturbing Dream**

I might have gone on in that flourish of activity if it hadn't been for a disturbing dream I had in September of 1976. In the dream, I was standing on a soap box at the end of my street preaching to a large crowd against the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I considered myself an expert on the subject. After all, for years I had been responsible for running off members of the church who practiced gifts like tongues, healing, or prophecy-gifts that I considered dangerous and divisive. I was preaching through my well-rehearsed seven-point sermon when, at the final point, a sensation of like hot electricity hit my head, traveled down my body, then went up again and out of my mouth. I awakened speaking in tongues.

I was so troubled by the dream and experience of speaking in tongues that, like a bag of sand with a hole in it, my confidence and self-assurance trickled away. 'Perhaps,' I thought, 'I don't know as much as I thought I did about the Christian life. Maybe I have been a Pharisee all of these years. What frightened me so much was that I thought I had been sincere with God. I judged everyone else's relationship with God according to my personal standards the closer they came to believing and behaving as I did, I thought the closer they were to God. That is a pitiful confession, but that is the way I lived.

I had gone to God asking Him what was wrong with the church, and He was showing me what was wrong with me. And, He wasn't finished with me yet.

The pressure of these thoughts built up, culminating a few weeks later in my falling on my bed in tears. 'Oh God,' I cried out, 'if all that stuff [meaning spiritual gifts like tongues and healing] is from You, then I have barely known you all these years.' There was a long silence. Then, I sensed in my heart a gentle answer. 'You're right.'

I was so devastated that I stopped teaching, resigned from the church board, and stopped giving my opinion about anything spiritual. I abandoned all that I had been devoted to for so long and hid out at home for three weeks, weeping and repenting of my attitude toward God and His Spirit. Today, I look back on that experience as a 'personality meltdown,' a breaking of my self-will that was so profound I have never been the same since.

During this time God showed me how blind and naked I was, and how in my self-assurance I had missed knowing Him for years. Then He showed me what He had meant to do through John years before and how I had stood in the way and prevented John from moving out in greater faith and power.

My heart was broken. My tears were pleas for mercy as He showed me all that I had been responsible for John missing Fifteen years before, shortly after we were converted, John spoke in tongues and prayed for our son's healing, and I persuaded him that it was not from God. The turning away from those experiences wounded John, saddling him with a sense of loss that he had not recovered from. God had a pattern, a blueprint for renewal, and John was a key in what God wanted to do. But so far we had missed it, and I was responsible.

While I cried I prayed over and over again the only prayer of mercy I knew, the old Catholic Latin Gregorian chant, 'Kyrie Eleison, Christi Eleison; Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy. Nothing else mattered. For three weeks I slept little and couldn't eat.

### **Hunger for God**

Out of this terrible crucible of guilt and sorrow a desperate longing and hunger for God emerged. This hunger was not for His will; it was for God Himself. Psalm 73:21-22 became my passage: 'When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before You.' I knew that I had come from pride and arrogance to senselessness and ignorance. In verse 25 the Psalm goes on to say, 'Whom have I in heaven but You? And being with You, I desire nothing on earth.'" That verse described my passion for God. I've never been interested in anything else since then.

This was happening to me during a time when God was also speaking to John. He had been working for two years at the Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth but was sensing God calling him back into the pastorate. Little did I know that the Holy Spirit was orchestrating change in both our lives simultaneously. The Holy Spirit had not forsaken us; He would restore those lost years.

John's preoccupation with God's dealing in his own life worked to my advantage during this time. Once John came home from a business trip (he was traveling frequently), saw my red puffy eyes, and asked what was wrong with me. I answered, 'I'm wrong. I've been so wrong.' He didn't know how to respond to me, so he inquired no further at that time about my condition.

In the middle of my pain, I somehow felt that what was happening wasn't just for me and John, it was for all the people we had cared for over the years. So many had come to God only to later wander away. They experienced too little power, too little life. I saw our people wandering aimlessly, hungry for God. I had been responsible for encouraging Laodician thinking-thinking we were rich and in need of nothing when in fact we were wretched, miserable, poor, naked and blind. They wanted more; they wanted to experience the Living God of the Bible. God told me to make restitution with those people I had wounded. I went, to many of the people I had driven out of the church and asked their forgiveness. They responded first with surprise and then with joy. As I was reconciled with those I had sinned against, God lifted the weight of my guilt. My tears began to dry.

Soon God stopped showing me what He had wanted to do in the past and began to show me what He was going to do in the future. I had a strong sense of God's desire for His bride, for the whole church-Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox.

### **"This Is It"**

God used an unusual experience to tell me that what He had in store went beyond our little Quaker church. One afternoon I was sitting by our swimming pool and in my mind's eye I saw us all being baptized in the water. I was startled both by the vision itself and by the idea of water baptism. You see, Quakers do not practice water baptism. So from that moment I knew He was going to do something that went outside of our denominational boundaries.

All of this was still difficult for me to accept. I could see that we were haughty and unbelieving desperately in need of change. And God promised that He would change us. But the change was not so much a revival as a transformation. It would be like getting caught up in the river described in Ezekiel 47-the water was too wide and deep for anyone to cross. Ezekiel said the river had a life of its own, sweeping away anyone who entered it. God was about to sweep us into His plans, and His plans had room for many, many people.

I told John very little about my experience, because my earlier influence in his life had been destructive. 'Lord,' I prayed, 'if this is of You, then influence John. I no longer trust myself in these matters.'

Several months later God gave me liberty to tell John that if he returned to the pastorate I would support him (this was important because several years earlier I told him I never wanted to be a pastor's wife again). I told him this in a restaurant after we attended a home prayer meeting that I helped lead. John had attended that evening for the first time and he was not impressed; all we did was pray and worship. After I told him I was willing to support him in returning to the pastorate he looked at me and said, "I suppose next you're going to tell me that you speak in tongues."

"Yes," I said. He almost drove his fork through the side of his mouth, because he knew that for me to speak in tongues meant God could do anything.

The home meeting we attended was started in October of 1976 by a few leaders in our church to encourage one another in their teaching ministries. When I heard about the gathering, God said, 'This is it,' by which He meant this was the beginning of the church He had shown me. When I first attended I knew why. God was undoing the self-sufficiency of the leaders; they were becoming learners again-Students with a hunger for God. We would meet and break into small groups and pray for each other. We worshiped God for hours, content to sing and listen to His voice in our midst.

The meeting size grew from 12 to 50 in a few weeks. People who had been away from the church for years were coming back also. Others were coming from everywhere, not even knowing why they were drawn to the meeting for they had really heard very little about it. We would receive telephone calls from people around the country who were hungry for God.

People continued to come, mostly young people, until we were sitting knee to back on the floor throughout the entire house. John began attending fairly regularly in January 1977. By March of 1977 there were over 125 adults attending, packing every room and hall, even spilling over onto the patio.

### **Healing**

Eventually our denomination asked our group to leave, and we understood why they had to ask. They'd been good to us, and we hated leaving. We agreed to leave, but only under one condition: that the church write a letter of release and give their blessing. They did write the letter, encouraging us to do what God had called us to. With that we received an important spiritual blessing. In retrospect, I believe their blessing explains some of the shaking and quaking and signs and wonders that we later experienced. The history of the Friends of Jesus, or Quakers (as they were mockingly called by others), was full of stories of the miraculous intervention of God. Leaving the church was difficult. After all, these people had been very kind to us over the years. We raised our children together, and many of them were our mentors. But God was calling us on to something new.

It was Mother's Day (May 8, 1977) the following week, 150 people met for the first time as a new church that would later be named Vineyard Christian Fellowship. John was our pastor, and he preached that Sunday on the reputation of illegitimacy that followed Jesus his whole life and how we, as a church born of the Spirit, would carry that stigma also. After he preached we worshiped for an hour and closed the meeting with prayer for each other.

Immediately after we became a church, John called a meeting of all the adults. He thought that for a church to grow in quantity and quality it must divide and form small groups. This was done to avoid the division between the 'inner core' of older members. We formed kinship groups, small units in which we could care for one another and meet needs. At first these groups were difficult, because we missed many of our old friends. But soon we discovered a deeper level of relationship with each other, and new members were being added.

John's attitude toward God, the church, and Scripture was quite different from what it had been in the past. Time and again he said that for years he had tried to run the church, but now he was committed to giving it to Jesus. No matter what the cost John challenged us to read Scripture as

learners and doers, never being content with only learning something new, but always aiming at changing the way we lived.

We read Scripture with new eyes. We could see clearly that Jesus and the early church healed the sick. We knew we had no idea about how we could heal the sick, but we wanted to learn how. John started teaching about healing and we prayed for healing. Nothing happened. We became disillusioned. But we refused to give up. So some of us gathered in small groups and cried out to God, weeping and pleading for Him to do what He promised in His word.

As is well known from John's writings, this went on for ten months, culminating in the healing of a woman with the flu after John prayed for her in February of 1978. During this period we were aware that the power we felt God had for us was missing. So we continued to pray and ask God what was wrong with us, what was missing in our lives, why we lacked power for healing "Oh that You would rend the heavens," we would pray from Isaiah 64. "That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence?"

### **Anointed for Ministry**

In early April of 1978 more signs of spiritual renewal began to appear. Around this time John started teaching a home Bible study. One evening he taught on the baptism and filling of the Holy Spirit. Afterward someone said, "Well, why don't you pray for us to be filled with the Holy Spirit?" So, John went around the room praying for us, and an incredible power was released from his hands. He touched people and they fell over. To John it was as though spiritual power came from his hands like electricity. This was the first time John actually felt power coming through him in this way.

We were not Pentecostal. In fact, we had never seen or experienced anything like this. There was no way we could have been preprogrammed to fall over. Nor can I imagine why we would have wanted to fall over. So, we could not deny the reality of the presence of God.

The following week John was once again teaching on healing. His text that day was about healing the invalid (John 5:1-15). In attendance was a young girl who suffered from a childhood accident that caused decelerated growth in one of her legs. This created painful back problems for her. During the Bible study, she went up and asked John if he would pray for her specifically to cause her shortened leg to grow. At the end of the study he announced the girl's request, inviting her to sit in the center of the group and receive prayer. John had her sit down and began praying. When he placed his hand on her leg power was released; her leg began jerking and quivering. When she stood up everyone could see that one pants leg was shorter than the other. She was healed!

On the way home from this meeting John and I discussed the relationship between teaching something and then modeling it for a group of people. Instead of show and tell this was a method of tell and show. We walked into our home talking about this new discovery, and John went to the refrigerator to get a glass of milk. As he was pouring the milk, John said, "It must be that when you teach the word of God the Holy Spirit..."

He never finished his sentence. As he started to say “Holy Spirit” his legs buckled and he caught himself on the counter, splashing milk all over in the process. He looked up at me with a surprised grin and said, “I think we're on to something here, Carol Kay.”

Soon John began receiving words of knowledge, the gift of the Spirit in which one receives specific information about a person or persons. He would stand before a group and see cones of light shining down on some people, those whom God was touching with his healing and renewing power. Before long the home Bible study was overflowing with people, some of whom were hungry to see miracles. We were afraid that many of them flocked to us only to get an experience, a spiritual 'high.' This grieved us deeply. During this time John considered stopping ministry in the Holy Spirit because of the selfish motivation on the part of many who came, and because he never wanted to be a 'big man' in ministry. God had already told him that this was to be the people's ministry. The church, John felt had been kept exclusively in the hands of the clergy for too long.

John was struggling with how he could help others experience the power and presence of God that he was beginning to experience. We hadn't fully realized yet that through the laying on of hands one can give away what God gives. We had read that Moses and Elijah did it but we didn't relate that to our experience. Then God spoke to John about anointing the people for ministry. On Sunday morning toward the end of the meeting John called forward people who wanted greater power for ministry, had them take off their shoes, anointed them with oil according to Leviticus 8 - on the right ear, the *thumb on the right hand, and the big toe of the right foot* (This was the way Moses consecrated Aaron and his sons for ministry.) John also laid hands on them to release the spiritual gift of healing. He wasn't completely sure of himself at first but he was sure that God told him to do it. Afterwards, he called for the sick to come forward and be prayed over by the people he had just anointed and prayed for. The results were staggering, as many were healed

So the Congregation, moved out into power healing, healing through the Holy Spirit. Soon many visitors were coming to see what we were doing. Sometimes we resented the way people came to watch us. But one morning a prophecy came that gave us peace: 'I've made you a marketplace.' People were no longer apprehensive of us, because when we prayed for people, we did it in a relaxed and gentle way. Our Quaker background made us more disposed to be quiet. There was no shouting or other loud behavior.

### **Come Holy Spirit**

On Mothers Day of 1981 we had a watershed experience that launched us into what today is called 'Power Evangelism.' At this time John invited a young man who had been attending our church to preach on a Sunday evening, The young man shared his testimony, which was beautiful and stirring then asked for all the people under the age of twenty-five (two-thirds of the congregation, which now numbered over 700) to come forward. None of us had a clue as to what was going to happen next. When they got to the front the speaker said, “For years now the Holy Spirit has been grieved by the church, but he's getting over it. Come Holy Spirit”

## **And He Came**

Most of these young people had grown up around our home, and we knew them well. We had four children between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four. One fellow, Tim, started bouncing. His arms flung out and fell over, but one of his hands accidentally hit a mike stand and he took it down with him. He was tangled up in the cord with the mike next to his mouth. Then, he began speaking in tongues, so the sound went throughout the gymnasium (by now we were meeting in a high school). We had never considered ourselves charismatic and certainly had never placed emphasis on the gift of tongues. We had seen a few people tremble and fall over before and we had seen many healings, but this was different. The majority of the young people were shaking and falling over. At one point it looked like a battlefield scene with bodies everywhere, people weeping, wailing and speaking in tongues, much shouting and loud behavior. And there was Tim in the middle of it all, babbling into the microphone.

A wide-eyed John sat by softly playing the piano. Some members of our staff were fearful and angry. Several people got up and walked out, never to be seen again—at least they were not seen by us.

But, I knew that God was visiting us. I was so thrilled, because I had been praying for power for so long. This might not have been the way I wanted to see it come, but this was how God gave it to us. I got up and started stepping over bodies and putting my hand next to them. I could feel the power, like heat or electricity, radiating off their bodies.

I asked one boy who was on the floor, “What's happening to you right now?” He said, “It's like electricity. I can't move!” I was amazed by the effect of God's power on the human body. I suppose, that I thought that it would all be an inward work, such as conviction or repentance. I never imagined there would be strong physical manifestations.

But John wasn't as happy as I. He had never seen large numbers of people sprawled out over the floor, yelling in tongues and shaking violently. He spent that night reading Scripture and historical accounts of revival from the lives of people like Whitefield and Wesley. He was afraid of doing anything that wasn't explicitly outlined in the Bible. But his study did not yield conclusive answers to questions raised from the previous evening's events. By 5 a.m. John was desperate. He cried out to God, “Lord, if this is you, please tell me.” A moment later the phone rang and a pastor friend of ours from Denver, Colorado, was on the line. “John,” he said, “I'm sorry for calling so early, but I have something really strange to tell you. I don't know what it means, but God wants me to say, 'It's Me,' John.”

## **Power Encounters**

That was all John needed. He didn't have to understand the trembling or why everything happened as it did; all he needed to know was the Holy Spirit did it.

We met with our staff that morning and the Holy Spirit came and healed old wounds and hurts, delivering us from fear. John declared that he was willing to put up with the discomfort of not knowing or understanding how the Holy Spirit works; never again, to the best of his ability, would he quench the Spirit.

At that time a revival broke out among our junior-high and high-school-aged young people. Hundreds of teenagers were converted to Christ through power encounters. Our young people witnessed to and healed others in the streets, restaurants, and stores. We baptized hundreds of new converts during the next few months, in our pool and in pools all around town.

John was cautious not to draw conclusions too quickly about what God was doing. Instead, he watched and prayed, asking God to bless what He was doing. We wanted what God wanted, not what we thought should happen. We learned to accept what God was doing no matter how strange it appeared to us. We had to risk our reputation for the sake of knowing God.

The Lord has blessed the Anaheim Vineyard Christian Fellowship. We now have over 5000 members and have grown to over 200 congregations in North America (Fall 1987). But in the end all of this means nothing if that vital ingredient is missing: hunger for God.

# ***Financial Giving***

# ***How to Think About Financial Giving***

## ***Giving as a life pattern***

A life pattern is the way a person structures his or her life. A pattern of life is built or drawn from the values that a person develops over time. These values come from many different sources: our family, our schooling, the church, etc.

A Christian life pattern does not happen just because an individual decides to be a Christian. Our old values have created habits and ways of thinking. When a person becomes a follower of Jesus, the old or conflicting values have to be changed. This value system change takes a long time since some habits are deeply ingrained in us.

Certainly for all of us, one of the basic values that is confronted when we become followers of Christ concerns our view of giving. Very simply, most of the world treats giving as an annoyance, a luxury, or something to be avoided as a sacrifice of life. Yet, when we come to the Bible we see something very different. God, himself, is a giver and he encourages us to give money, time and our whole lives over and over again.

## ***Ten good reasons to give***

Giving is...

1. *An opportunity to experience joy.* God is a giver. Anytime we imitate God and do the works that He does, e.g., share our faith, forgive another person who has sinned against us, pray for a sick person, or give financially, we are tapping into the very life and being of God. People who hoard never have an opportunity to experience God's life. Only givers can experience the joy of God.
2. *An opportunity to show gratitude to God.* God has blessed each one of us with a variety of blessings: material well-being, family, church, work, health, etc. How many other ways do we really have to say "thank you" to God other than to return to Him a portion of what He has given us? Simply stated, giving is an opportunity for us to say to God, "Thank you!"
3. *An opportunity to participate in all the ministries of the church.* Churches are involved in a wide number of ministries that no one person could, by themselves, do or invest time and money in.
4. *An opportunity to practically acknowledge our view of life.* Either the money that we control is ours, which is a secular world view, or all of our money belongs to God. True, only a portion of our time and only some of our money will be specifically

designated for God and for His church, but all the rest ought to be dedicated to Him, used according to His will, and devoted to things that honor Him.

5. *An opportunity to support what we believe in.* One of the best ways for a person to support a cause that they believe in is to give money to that cause. Political organizations and various groups supporting certain rights (abortion rights, gay rights, freedom in the arts) certainly understand the importance of financing. Of course financial giving is not the only way to support something. Giving our time, praying for that cause, and supporting it with encouragement are all other valid ways to support a cause; but giving financially is certainly one major way to support what we believe in.

6. *An opportunity to be free from financial anxiety.* Many people are anxious about their financial futures because they haven't learned about the paradoxical nature of the Christian life. People who hold tightly to their money will be in bondage to financial concerns. People who open their hands freely in giving will experience emotional liberty in financial matters. Jesus was not a wealthy man, yet He was a man who had tremendous financial peace.

7. *An opportunity to pay for services that we and our families receive.* It is an extraordinary thing that many of us receive services such as counseling, training for our children, teaching, and opportunities to participate in ministry and yet allow others to pay for the services we receive. Someone is picking up the bill for the lights, heat, pastoral salaries, mortgage, and materials that we all enjoy. If you are able to financially give, and almost everyone in Vineyard is able to give, and you are not, then someone is paying the freight for you.

8. *An opportunity to receive financial blessing from God.* God challenges us to put Him to the test. He says in Malachi 3, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this, says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it." This promise from the book of Malachi is one of those promises that God is very quick to fulfill. Tithing does produce financial blessing from God!

9. *An opportunity to store up treasure in heaven.* God takes note of everything we do in secret for Him such as our secret prayer, our secret fasting, or our secret giving (Mt. 6). Whether there is a huge payoff here on earth (the book of Malachi tells us there *is* an earthly payoff) there will certainly be a heavenly payoff for those who give financially toward the work of God's kingdom.

10. *An opportunity to give beyond me and my own family.* "Us four...no more", "God bless me...that's as far as I can see" is not what Christianity is about. Christian giving involves sowing beyond ourselves and our own circle or family.