

Just as a kind of preamble to this conversation, let's discuss why we're even talking about DNA. Why is it important to pay attention to your essential values and your essential theology? There's a wonderful book written a couple of decades ago by Jim Collins. It's called *Built to Last*. It's a business book. He said that enduring, successful companies adhere to a fundamental set of principles that guided their behaviors and their decisions over time. These values, this core, preserve the essence of the organization.

And so, I would just ask the question, "What is at the core of your church? What are the essential things that guide your behavior? And the church's behavior? What guides your decisions, even when you're under pressure, when there's been some scandal or a church split? What are those things that will guide you even as you walk through the valley of the shadow of death? The Core DNA will define your church's personality. It will attract the employees that you want to hire because people will pick up on the value system of the church. They'll see how you actually operate, not what you say, but how you do things. Your DNA will attract the right employees, and it will repel the wrong ones. Your DNA will attract certain kinds of people from your community to your church, and it will repel others. So what is the DNA of the Vineyard?

KINGDOM THEOLOGY

For the Vineyard, nothing is more important to us than the gospel of the kingdom. The gospel of the kingdom is the announcement that God's long-promised reign has arrived in and through Jesus the Messiah. The kingdom is God's saving rule breaking into history, and climactically expressed in Jesus's death and resurrection. Part of the uniqueness of the Vineyard, and I am not aware of any other denomination or church movement like this, Vineyard puts the kingdom of God at the very center of our theology and practice. We need to understand that the theological center of any church or denomination is going to drive everything. Vineyard has put in the center of its theology the announcement that Jesus is Lord, and the kingdom is what happens when Jesus reigns.

To bring this down to earth for us, you can tell a tremendous amount about a church movement by what it puts at the center. In Lutheranism, justification by faith alone is at the center, and everything is driven by that. For Reformed Presbyterians, covenant theology would be at the center, and everything will flow from that. For Pentecostals, Acts 2:4 and the promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit would be at the center. In contrast to every denomination that I can think of, the Vineyard says that the message of the kingdom, with Jesus as the king, is at the center. The gospel of the kingdom is the integrating point for everything else Vineyard churches do and believe. It's the lens through which we read the Scriptures.

John Calvin, in his *Institutes* said that the way we look at the world is through the lens of scripture. We put on scriptural spectacles. The Scriptures are how we look at people. The Scriptures are how we look at what's wrong with the world. The Scriptures are how we look at suffering and how we look at marriage and family and politics. We look at the world through the lens of the scriptures. And for us in the Vineyard, the way we look at the scriptures is through the lens of the kingdom.

What does it mean that the gospel of the kingdom is the integrating point for all that we do and believe, that Vineyard DNA starts with a clear grasp of the gospel of the kingdom? The church's present life, its missions, and practices flow out of its vision of God's future. Here's the deal. Let me bring this way down. How a church or a Christian imagines the future determines the way that it's going to live in the present. If the mission of God can be summed up as having people put their trust in Jesus and their souls will go to heaven, then that will drive present practices. The goal of the church will be to get as many people as possible to pray the sinner's prayer and be baptized, so that people's souls will go to heaven. But it's probably the case that if that is your church's theology, you don't have a lot of space for feeding hungry people or racial reconciliation or activities of justice, or any thought-out program for ecology or engagement with the public school system.

Our vision of the future will determine how we live life now and what our mission and practices are. For the Vineyard, we focus our attention on God's promise of a new creation in Jesus. And so Christians are called to embody that future now. We understand that the church is meant to be a sign of God's future in-breaking into this present age. What we pray for, what we work for, what we look for is that future age being practically expressed in this present time.

Another way to put it is that what we do follows from what we believe about the future that God has promised. And so for us in the Vineyard, what we would say is that at the center of the gospel of the kingdom is personal salvation. But that's not the circumference.

I love this part of our DNA - the gospel of the kingdom is so capacious. It's huge. I picture it as being like an enormous tree in which all the birds of the air can find a home. Kingdom theology has room for personal and social ethics. For example, when you believe that God's future is the restoration of all things, not just personal redemption, but the rescue and liberation of the universe from sin, then there's room for both personal and social ethics. A great example of this in the Bible is to just read through the so-called holiness code in Leviticus 18 and 19. Some of you may be familiar with that language, but the Lord says to the nation of Israel at the very center of Leviticus in chapters 18 through 20, the same thing he says to us in the New Testament church in the Sermon on the Mount, "Be different!" Be different from the pagans around you in your

community. But also be different from the religious hypocrites who populate the church. And so what we read in Leviticus is the same message, because God always says the same thing to his people. Be different.

In Leviticus 18, we read these words in verses one to five,

The LORD said to Moses, 2 “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘I am the LORD your God. 3 You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. 4 You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the LORD your God. 5 Keep my decrees and laws, for the person who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD.

The rest of the chapter goes on to focus on sexual ethics. But then in Leviticus 19, the Lord says in verses one and two:

The LORD said to Moses, 2 “Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.

We read there a grab bag of commands about what holiness looks like. So we read commands about keeping the Sabbath and the proper way of sacrifice, which are all about religion and worship. But then we read these personal ethical commands, like not stealing and not lying and not spreading slander. Now, all of this would be expected by any good evangelical - God is concerned with religion and God is concerned with personal ethics. But surprisingly for many Christians

who are not familiar with the gospel of the kingdom and God's plan to restore all things, the Lord also speaks about social ethics. Holiness involves concern for the poor and the foreigner and the disabled. So we read these commands.

- **'When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Lev 19:9**
- **Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the LORD your God. Lev 19:10**
- **'Do not defraud or rob your neighbor. Lev 19:13a**
- **“Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight. Lev 19:13b**
- **'When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. Lev 19:33**
- **The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God. Lev 19:34**

Kingdom theology leaves room for high expectation as well as suffering.

The Gospel of the Kingdom is capacious enough - it's big enough - to include both a radical expectation of God's intervention now, in healing, in salvation, and in answered prayer - and pastoral care as we offer comfort and are a faithful presence to people who experience the “not yet” of the kingdom. So many

charismatic movements lean towards the “already” of the kingdom, as if we Christians are called to dominate this world. The expectation is for believers to move from mountaintop to mountaintop with no valleys in between. So many Christians are taught that, if you have enough faith, if you clean up your life, if you pray hard enough, if you fast enough, you will experience victory all over time. We have these high levels of expectation, but then, there's no space in our theology or in our lives personally for failure, for disappointment, for betrayal, for sickness, for anything that's outside of our control to impinge on us or the people we love or our churches.

On the other hand, there's so many low expectation churches in which people would just fall over dead if they prayed for a sick person and the person actually got well, or if a demon was actually expelled in a church service, or if somebody had a prophetic word that was spot on for an individual in the congregation. There's almost no expectation of God's present day in-breaking.

What I love about the Vineyard is that the Vineyard has both high expectation because of our kingdom theology of the “already” and the “not yet,” that God can and will break in right now and touch someone who is in pain or who is experiencing anxiety or nightmares or past trauma - that God can and will intervene, in this moment, as we invite his presence. But we also have a robust theology of suffering so that we can come alongside of people and love them as they experience less than God's ideal. We can be a faithful presence to people

who are not yet set free, but instead continue to struggle with unwanted temptation or unwanted suffering. The message of the kingdom leaves room for both mercy and justice.

Kingdom theology has room for justice.

When the future is understood as “if you believe in Jesus, when you die, your soul will go to heaven,” there really is no room for justice. Justice is often seen as the social gospel or just a kind of left wing, Marxist intrusion into pure Christianity. To see how a shrunken gospel plays out in real time, conservative, white, Bible-believing Christians were among the staunchest opponents to integration in the South. If you read the history of the Southern Baptist Church, it was formed over the slavery issue. The church literally has its roots in support of chattel slavery and the brutalization of black people. W.A. Criswell was the pastor of First Baptist down in Dallas, which is now pastored by Robert Jeffress - Billy Graham was a member there, though rarely attended - Criswell was a strong supporter of racial segregation for much of his ministry. He had a constricted gospel that was allergic to calls for racial justice. What we found in the 1950s and 1960s, is that there was virtually no evangelical support for Dr. King or for the civil rights marches or civil rights legislation. There were white rabbis and Catholic priests and Unitarians and mainline Protestants who marched with Dr. King, but almost no one from the white conservative evangelical or Pentecostal camps

Christianity Today, which was founded by Dr. Billy Graham, was very critical of Martin Luther King through most of *Christianity Today's* history in the 1950s and 60s. When Billy Graham was asked about Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech, in which King evoked a vision of his children playing with white children, Billy Graham replied, "Only when Christ comes again will little white children of Alabama walk hand in hand with little black children." Jerry Falwell opposed Dr. King saying, "Preachers are not called to be politicians, but to be soul winners." Of course, 15 years later, he founded the Moral Majority and said that the idea that religion and politics don't mix was invented by the devil to keep Christians from running their own country.

Many of the private Christian schools in the South were created after Brown versus Board of Education, where public schools were shut down because of forced integration. The IRS went after those schools in the 1970s. They denied tax exempt status to Bob Jones University, which prohibited, among other things, interracial dating in 1976. And they also went after whites-only Christian academies, which was the impetus for Falwell to begin the Moral Majority. My point is really simple. Again, if your entire vision of God's future is that the souls of those who trust in Jesus go to heaven, then we're probably not going to care a great deal about things like racial justice. So long as white souls are saved and so long as black souls are saved, we've done everything we need to do to populate heaven. But the message of the kingdom goes way beyond this.

For many Bible-believing Christians, there has been a real struggle regarding how to integrate issues of economic justice or racial justice into our preaching and into our Christian theology. In Christopher Wright's wonderful commentary on Deuteronomy, (which, by the way, makes for great devotional reading - if you want to read a wonderful commentary in your quiet times, I would highly recommend Chris Wright on the Book of Deuteronomy), he says that the proper way to read the Torah, that is, the first five books of the Old Testament, is to always ask the question, "In whose favor was this law written?" What we see in the laws of the Torah is that the laws are always written in favor of the weak. In fact, Chris Wright makes this the hermeneutical key to reading the whole Torah and Deuteronomy in particular. Wright argues that the Torah is structurally and intentionally biased in favor of the weak, the vulnerable, and those without power. So whenever we come to one of the laws regarding whether it's gleaning in the fields or people with disabilities or a hired workman or a woman taken captive in a war or what happens with a slave and how we release slaves, especially to a slave who's displeasing to his master, or immigrants or widows, what we see throughout the Torah, is what theologians call God's preferential option for the poor. Now, where this ties in with kingdom theology, is that for Israel, the relief of poverty is not just an issue of charity. In other words, for the kingdom of Israel, the relief of poverty is not simply a function of individual choices, as people are led, or whether they're generous or not generous. Rather, as part of the kingdom, the relief of poverty is part of the institutional and legal structure of the society. God built into the very fabric of the society that there should be no long-term debt

weighing people down for generations, but that there was a time for the stranglehold of debt to be broken. God built into the society this principle that there would be no poor among you. So, as we're preaching the kingdom, we're giving people a picture of what God's ideal society ought to look like. What will the future be like? And one way that we see this concretized in this world before Messiah comes back, is to watch the way that God organized his people in the Old Testament. We see that we're having glimpses, previews of coming attractions, as it were, in the nation of Israel. So justice, especially economic justice, and care for the weak is part of our understanding of the kingdom.

Kingdom theology gives meaning to all of life.

Because our future as saved people is not spent as disembodied souls in heaven because kingdom theology teaches that the future of humanity is to be embodied in resurrection bodies, living on a restored earth, not a completely new earth, but rather a renewed earth, that gives meaning to all of life. Let me put it this way: evangelicals historically have had a lifeboat theology. D.L. Moody, the great evangelist of the 19th century, said that God showed him a picture of the world. It was like a shipwreck with people thrown into the ocean, and they were drowning. The Lord said to Moody, "Moody, you get the lifeboat and pull as many people as possible into the lifeboat." That's the standard evangelical picture of the task of the Christian. The Christian is trying to pull as many souls as possible into heaven by preaching the gospel. That's certainly part of what we do. But rather than

lifeboat theology, I've always appreciated a different metaphor, and that was ark theology. God said to Noah to fill the ark with all of the species of animals in the world. Noah didn't just save people. Noah saved creation. And so that's what kingdom theology allows us to engage in, the saving of creation.

There are two books that I really want to commend to your attention. One is called *Heaven is a Place on Earth*, by Michael Wittmer. It's subtitled "*Why Everything You Do Matters to God*." Wittmer does a great job of deconstructing the traditional Christian view in which our futures are to live as disembodied souls in heaven with God. In Vineyard's kingdom theology, heaven is just an intermediate way station on our way to the ultimate future, which is living as in an embodied existence in our new resurrection bodies, on a renewed earth. Wittmer works out the implications of that view for non-professional clergy, in terms of being Christians in the workplace, in marriage, in government, with respect to our own bodies, in our families and so on. It's a wonderful book that, in a very simple way, communicates the fullness of kingdom theology.

Another book that is a little more challenging but is incredibly inspiring - if you haven't read it, you need to - it's called *Agents of Flourishing: Pursuing Shalom in Every Corner of Society* by Amy Sherman. Amy runs through a really comprehensive understanding of biblical shalom, bringing flourishing and blessing to all of creation. And then, after she works the idea of shalom out theoretically, she addresses it practically. What does it look like to bring shalom

to our communities. How can we bring the elements of shalom - beauty and creativity or learning and discovery or physical and psychological health or unity or economic prosperity to our cities? Because all of these are dimensions of shalom, she intersperses chapters on these things with practical examples of churches that are bringing beauty to their community, or churches that are launching businesses or churches that are bringing education to local prisons or help to local elementary schools. Agent of Flourishing is a really inspiring book. It's a great book for a pastor and their board or a pastor and their leadership team to study. It will definitely spur you to dream bigger regarding what local mission for your church might look like. Kingdom theology gives space for that.

Alongside kingdom theology, let me share other elements of Vineyard DNA.

MERCY

One of the essential DNA elements of the Vineyard is mercy. John Wimber regularly spoke about mercy. Vineyard people see ourselves as recipients of God's mercy. As our grateful response, we are called to demonstrate God's mercy to the church and to the world. Healing ministry was such a key component of the Vineyard and remains a key mark of Vineyard ministry. But, John always emphasized that healing is not about technique and healing ministry is not primarily about power. Unlike the Pentecostals and Charismatics, John regularly said that healing was primarily about the mercy of God breaking into a situation.

WORSHIP

Another element of Vineyard DNA is Vineyard worship. You cannot understand the Vineyard without understanding Vineyard worship, because it was key to living out our values. Vineyard worship was the very opposite of the triumphalist, charismatic and Pentecostal worship of its day. Vineyard worship emphasizes certain things that unfortunately, we've in many ways gotten away from. Vineyard worship emphasized intimacy with God. I've always loved that little play on words, intimacy means "into me, see." We are saying to the Lord in worship, "Look into me, I'm baring my heart to you. I'm completely vulnerable before you." Vineyard worship was the opposite of showy or hype. It emphasized, alongside of intimacy, our own brokenness and dependence on God. We didn't come to God as successful, swaggering, great men and women of God. We came before the Lord in brokenness and humility and dependence.

Vineyard worship emphasized not only intimacy with God and brokenness and dependence, but the kindness and tenderness of God. We never got tired of singing about how kind God was, how kind God has been to us, and how merciful. It was all about the Father's love. It was this combination of things that led to a certain posture for the worship leader. Because we were emphasizing intimacy and the Father's love and brokenness and dependence, attention wasn't drawn to the worship leader. So much of contemporary worship is about the leader, who's doing all kinds of body movements on the stage and drawing

attention to his or her singing abilities. In contrast, Vineyard worship leaders took a posture of, “I’m just here to lead you into the presence of God, and then I get out of the way.” There was a simplicity to the worship leader's approach. This emphasis on mercy and humility led to a style of worship leadership which was a fundamental DNA element for the Vineyard.

HUMILITY: Everyone Gets to Play

It's impossible to speak about Vineyard's DNA without speaking about humility.

Vineyard was or has historically been the opposite of a celebrity culture. John

Wimber regularly said that authority always has to be paired with humility. He

said that the only safe place for power and power ministry is under the cross.

And if you want to move in power, you have to learn to embrace weakness.

That's why, in one of the most famous quotes from John that almost anyone who knows anything about Vineyard will repeat over and over again, he said,

“Everyone gets to play.”

John Wimber was the first person I ever heard speak about situational gifts. I

don't know how many of you are even familiar with the phrase situational gifts. I

haven't heard a lot about this outside of my own church in quite some time. John

had a refreshing way of teaching on the 1st Corinthians 12 gifts that I had never

heard before. For many years, the standard way to understand spiritual gifts was

that they were possessions. In other words, God gave a particular gift to a

particular person, and then you “had” that gift. You could kind of whip it out

whenever you desired. In fact, this idea of gift as personal possession was so strong that people used to take spiritual gifts tests. You would run down 50 questions about what you like, what you did, and then at the end of it, you'd get a score. And they would say, "Your highest gift is leadership or giving or mercy." Typically, a lot of the charismatic gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 weren't a part of that. But John said, "What? Let's take a look at 1st Corinthians 12 again. The Spirit gives gifts as he wills."

John compared the giving of gifts to tools that a plumber might use on a job. In John's telling, the plumber goes to a job, and sees that he needs a wrench, and a set of pliers and a screwdriver, and he looks in his toolbox and finds the toolbox is empty. So he starts crying out to God, "Oh God, oh God, oh God!" And then in that moment, to meet that need, God gives a particular gift, a gift of discernment, a gift of wisdom, a gift of healing, a gift of prophecy. But the gift is not a possession of the plumber. Instead, if the plumber goes to the next job, with exactly the same need, he'll look in his toolbox and again find the gift is not there. The gift belongs to the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit gives that gift as he wills. And so the plumber has to cry out again for that particular tool. Based on the will of God, God may give that gift at that moment or not.

Now, this is such a radically different view of spiritual gifts, and yet the first time I heard it nearly 40 years ago, it was one of the most liberating, indeed, revolutionary teachings that I had ever heard. Up until that time, I was persuaded

that I was a teacher and I had some evangelistic gifting and I was a leader, but I didn't think that I could ever heal anyone, because I wasn't aware of anyone who I had ever prayed for who got healed. I didn't think I could get prophetic words, because I wasn't aware of prophesying in the past. I knew that I spoke in tongues, and had some other charismatic experiences, but there were a whole set of gifts that I just thought, "Well, God has not given them to me." But when John said that the gifts are not given as possessions, but rather to meet a need in the body, or in church, out of God's love and mercy for this other person, then, truly, "everyone gets to play." And the more I embraced that idea that God could use even me to heal or prophesy, I was willing to stretch out my hand in obedience to the Lord, and pray. And... I began to see people healed.

John democratized ministry. You know, the Protestant Reformation was all about the priesthood of all believers. But in large measure, this idea that every single Christian is a priest was a theological statement, but wasn't a lived reality. John said, "Yes, we believe that. Now let's do it." He was the first person that I ever listened to who said, "Let's live our theology. Let's do it." I remember sitting there as a guy in my late 20s, and I thought, "Do it? I thought we're supposed to just believe it!" But John said, "Let's let's live this out. If we say we believe it, let's actually put it into practice." And so this notion that God is not just looking for gifted leaders, but he has a gifted church.

Vineyard doesn't have celebrity leaders, but we have a gifted church. That means that all of us get to do ministry. And so the leader's job, and the way I began to learn leadership was, it wasn't my job to do everything that God wanted done through the local church. My job was to release people to do ministry. The way I saw the church was as a treasure chest filled with value. That was a vision the Lord gave me early on. I was like a man opening a treasure chest and there were all these jewels in it - strands of pearls, gold crowns. My job as a leader was to unlock the treasure chest and then spread all of the riches that were present in the church, not only around the church, but also around the community. That's how our church grew. So, rather than control as the operative approach to leadership or alignment that everything has to be in alignment, as the business consultants say, with our particular mission statements, our church just has to be aligned with the scriptures and with the breadth of the kingdom of God.

Let me tell you a story, just to illustrate this. Because we had a church that released people, I was, frankly, unaware of the vast majority of things that our church was doing. And I would just say a couple of things here. Number one, most of our church ministries were not started by me. They were started by individuals in the church, whom God had healed from some life trauma. I've always believed that a neglected aspect of our teaching on the parable of the talents is that we often say that our talents are our gifts, or our natural abilities, or our talents, or our opportunities, And all of that is true. But I think one of the

greatest talents that's in our own lives, but especially in the lives of people in our church, are places of wounding or abuse that God has healed. He wants people to comfort others with the comfort that they've received.

Our food pantry was started by a woman who was a single mom, lived a rough life, was on welfare for a number of years. She had a couple of kids. She was on food stamps, and then she got saved. As a result of that, she got herself on her feet and was working and she just wanted to give back. So we had in town at the time, a Wonderbread factory that sold day-old bread. She would go and buy several loaves of inexpensive bread and huge jars of peanut butter, and she and her kids would make peanut butter sandwiches on Saturday morning. She'd steal napkins from McDonald's, wrap up the sandwiches, put them in a brown paper bag, and bring them to an area of our town where lots of homeless men lived. She and her kids would hand those sandwiches out. Several other folks heard about this, and they said, "Hey, we'd like to join you! How do we do it?" And she said, "Well, you go to the Wonder Bread factory, and you buy day-old bread, and you get peanut butter, and then you steal some napkins, wrap up the sandwiches, and then you hand them out." The ministry began to grow, and then it went way beyond her organizational skills. And so we got some help in there and we opened our first food pantry. That was the beginning of Vineyard Columbus's Mercy Ministry in our city. It started with a woman who had been rescued by the Lord in his mercy and kindness, and decided to show mercy and kindness to other people in need.

We had the largest Value Life ministry in our state. We ministered to literally thousands and thousands of women across central Ohio who were facing unintended pregnancies. Women who came to our church facing unintended pregnancies were paired with another woman in the church who would walk alongside her and help her with practical needs. The women were driven to doctors appointments. We found women jobs and apartments. We stayed with the women for two years after the baby was born. They got practical, material help like diapers and cribs and little bassinets and all of that, but all of it started with a woman who had gotten pregnant in high school and had her first baby at age 15. Afterward, she continued to go to high school and got pregnant again, but this time aborted the baby. And then some years later, she went to a support and recovery group at our church in which she was ministered to concerning the abortion that she had as a teenager. Out of the mercy she received, she felt like the Lord wanted her to minister to other women facing unintended pregnancy. She was really skilled and she built this ministry where, over the course of 20 years, I think she ministered to something like 8000 women. They were sent to us from hospitals and pregnancy centers. The point is, if you really embrace this notion that everyone gets to play, it will release so much talent and service in your church and in your community. If we pastors let go of control and just stir up and encourage whatever God has put into people's lives, it would revolutionize our ministries.

We had a dog training program in our parking lot. Every, it was like Thursday afternoons or something. people from the neighborhood would come with their dogs and we had a woman who was a dog trainer. We taught dancing for kids, things that I never would have thought of, that was dancing for 2 and 3 year old children. We also had Portuguese lessons, because folks felt free to use their gifts for the good of others.

SPIRIT-LED LEADERSHIP

Another strand of DNA for the Vineyard that John Wimber taught us was that Jesus is the head of the church. That meant that Jesus got to call the shots by his Holy Spirit. So for Vineyard, it was really essential that we had Spirit-led ministry. I would contrast that with so much of the insecurity of pastors these days, to believe that God will not speak and lead as he wants to. I've read tons of leadership books. I'm not opposed to them. I've read lots of business books. I'm not opposed to them. I've heard I don't know how many messages on leadership from Christian leaders and from non-Christian leaders. But, if all of that replaces the leadership of God for us as individuals, for a pastor and a leadership team, if, when we're at a crossroads, we don't call for a time in the church of fasting and prayer and seeking the Lord, we're not following the biblical pattern and we're certainly not living out Vineyard DNA. In ministry, I always tried to wait on the Lord for the big decisions that we had to make. The Lord was so merciful and regularly gave us prophetic words and visions and leadings that were way beyond anything we could have come up with. And our testimonies were like

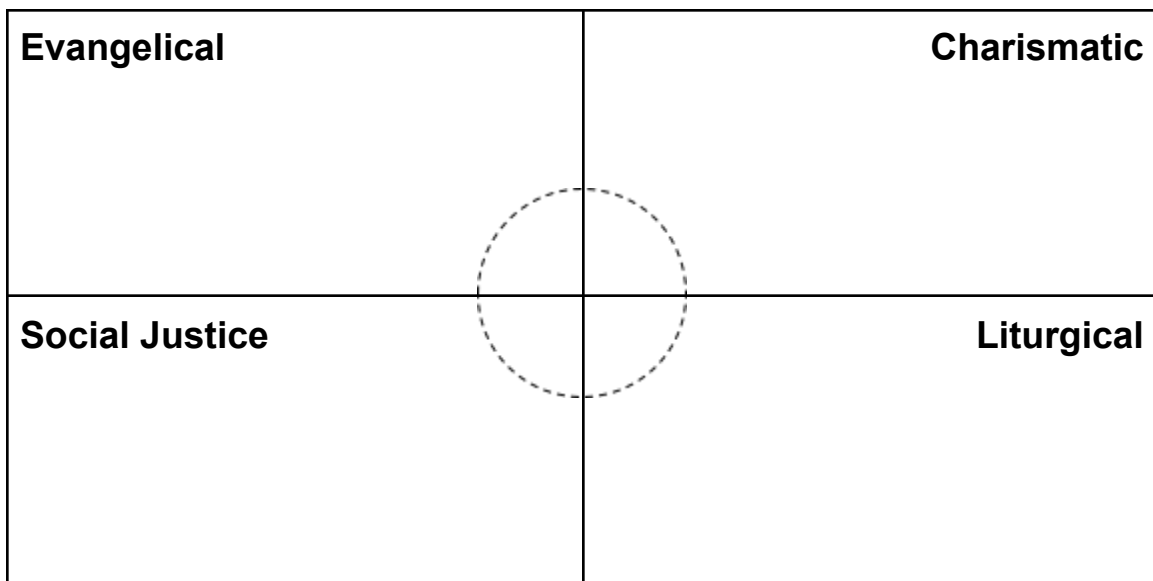
stones of remembrance in our history of “Here's where God intervened. Here's where God delivered us.”

- The answer to prayer for our first building
- The prophetic word about the boxing ring
- The answer to prayer regarding our loan for building our first building
- The prophetic vision regarding the building of our community center.

Another strand of your DNA is this:

GOD LOVES THE WHOLE CHURCH

John had such an ecumenical heart. He was the first person that I heard in an evangelical context speak so warmly about Roman Catholics.



What is antithetical to Vineyard's DNA?

In wrapping up this teaching about Vineyard DNA, I think it would be helpful to contrast Vineyard DNA with what really is antithetical to Vineyard's DNA. At the beginning of 1st Timothy, Paul writes,

“As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines anymore.” (1 Timothy 1:3)

He calls these false teacher's activity *heterodidaskalein*. The false teachers are teaching doctrine which is *heteros* - the idea is that there is a norm for teaching and the false teachers have deviated from that norm. They are teaching, in the words of Galatians, a different gospel. What I've observed in the Vineyard, and really in a huge number of contemporary churches in America, is a departure in terms of our fundamental rooting in the scriptures. When I think about Vineyard DNA, we start with the assumption that we're always going back to the Bible as pastors and as church people, and that we're seeing the world, in Calvin's words, through the lens of the Bible. Or to use Charles Spurgeon's illustration about what it means to soak in the Bible, it was said of Spurgeon that if you cut him, he bled Bible.

The people who started the Vineyard were like Spurgeon. If you cut them, they bled Bible. They were looking for a deeper experience with God, because their entire experience was with the Bible. They were longing for a touch from the Holy

Spirit. They were longing for an encounter. They were longing for spiritual reality. So they spent hours in worship and in prayer and in brokenness and confession before the Lord, repenting of their spiritual dryness and their distance from God. And then the Holy Spirit came and met these dried out, Bible-loving Christians. But over the course of the 1980s, as John Wimber's fame grew, he became better known as the signs and wonders man. People who were attracted to John's conferences often were not coming because he was the Bible man. Rather, they came because he was the guy who would bring the power of the Holy Spirit. And so the Vineyard movement, in my estimation, drifted away from the most essential part of our DNA, which was a deep rooting in the scriptures. And more and more, we started to move towards a rooting in experience and then to an openness to lots of substitutes for the scripture. Or, as the apostle Paul says, *heterodidaskalein*, a different teaching, a different doctrine. Well, that goes back many years, but I observe the same thing today. My concern is that, for many younger pastors, we're not sensitive to how much different kinds of messages are impacting us, and what's at the core and what's on the periphery.

Let me put it differently. Arthur Holmes, the Wheaton College philosophy professor, had a famous saying that, "All truth is God's truth." And I believe that. God has lots of ways of speaking to us. He speaks through his Word, in what we call special revelation. But he also speaks through his world, what has been called general revelation. We can learn from anybody, anywhere. But especially for pastors who want to build Christ-honoring churches, churches that are filled

with disciples of Jesus, the core of the church needs to be the Word of God, and not messages from other sources. The periphery could be these other things, but the core, what we constantly come back to is, “What does God's word say?”

Again, to understand Vineyard's DNA, it's helpful to put it up against its rivals - different teaching or a different gospel. We start importing into our DNA something that is foreign to the Vineyard. I just want to mention 4 things that I see imported into, not only the Vineyard, but churches all across America.

The first would be business principles. Again, I have read lots of business books. I've gleaned helpful lessons from those books. But when we consider what's core to the church, we really need to start with scripture, and not with business principles. Where I think we get confused is that there is such an urge to market the church, and many times that marketing of the church is redefined by Christian leaders as doing what missionaries have always done - studying the people, knowing their interests, and their needs, and then shaping the message accordingly. But I think that there are such clear differences. I think that for us to be faithful to the gospel of the kingdom, we need to draw a really clear line of distinction between being missional and being marketers.

Let me share some of the differences that I see. The first difference, and maybe the major difference between what a missionary does, and what a marketer does, is that missionaries study people in order to discover what the idols of a

particular culture are. We need to know where people are giving their hearts and their allegiance so that those idols can be challenged by the claims of Jesus's lordship. So the idol in a culture may be money, may be sex, may be power, or it may be security or fame or family. Missionaries study cultures to discover the idols, and then to displace them with the claims of Jesus as Lord. Marketers do exactly the opposite. Marketers study what people want, what they deeply desire, in order to give people what they want. And what happens when we don't make this distinction between being missional and being marketers, is that we can end up baptizing the idols of the culture instead of displacing them and creating true disciples of Jesus. We baptize the idols, and people think that that's Jesus.

Let me give you some illustrations, and I see this all the time in church. What lots of Christian churches do is they discover people want to be prosperous. We love money. And so what we say to people is, "Listen. You can get what you want even more by following Jesus. Jesus will make you prosperous. If you follow the principles of the Bible, you will get wealthier. You'll learn that you don't have to be in debt, and your life will really work, and you'll have enough money to put your kids in college." This is a tight rope. And surely there's wisdom that will lead to blessing. But is the essential idol of money being displaced in the person's heart so that they are so in love with Jesus that they don't need prosperity in order to live a satisfied life? Or have we simply said, "Jesus is the way that you'll get what you really love, which is money." I see the same thing happening with sex, as another illustration. A very famous pastor down in Texas literally brought a

king-sized bed to the stage as a preaching prop. And he challenged the married people in his congregation to have sex for 30 days. I don't know what the series was called. It could have been something like maximum sexuality, maximum sex or something like that. But what this pastor was communicating is the message of marketers. "Listen. You want to have great sex, don't you? Do you know that if you and your wife turn to Jesus, your sex will be better than it's ever been!" Now, that's just on its face false. But it also baptizes the idol of sex in our culture, and we now reframe it in Christian terms, instead of displacing the idol with the kingship of Jesus, we baptize the idol.

Of course, there are other problems with marketing and marketing logic versus missional logic. Marketing logic emphasizes strength and highlights success. It avoids offense. So every church website shows smiling people who are doing amazing. Sunday morning is like a pep rally, and we carefully curate our messages to eliminate anything that might make anyone uncomfortable. But the gospel of the kingdom emphasizes not strength, but weakness, and not success, but dependence, and sometimes failure. Instead of worshiping power, the gospel of the kingdom calls us to worship a crucified Messiah. One of the bottom lines of the difference between marketing and missional faithfulness is that marketing will inevitably adapt the product to consumer tastes. Missionaries don't adapt the gospel of the kingdom. We call people to adapt themselves to the king. The call is follow me. Repent, change your behavior. So I think it's really good in all of our importation of business books and business leadership to constantly read these

things with a discerning heart and say, “Okay, what here can I use without compromising the gospel of the kingdom and the essential DNA that forms our church? And what here will shift the way I do leadership or what I display in leadership versus what the Bible calls me to display?”

Along with business principles, a second thing often imported into our churches is therapy. So much of Christianity in America has become therapeutic. In the Vineyard, what I see, and this is a really subtle thing, is that one of the branches of therapy that we have imported is family systems theory. Now, family systems theory can be genuinely illuminating. And it's really, really helpful. But when it's imported uncritically into the life of the church, it can displace biblical categories for sin and repentance and holiness.

Let me just give you a few illustrations of how family systems theory can become a different gospel. When we approach problems in the church, we start saying that the real issue here is anxiety in the system. There may be anxiety in the system, but biblical language says “out of the heart comes pride, fear, control, unbelief.” In other words, what do we believe is the explanatory center for why things are bad in a church? And the explanatory center is rarely talked about these days as the absence of the fear of the Lord, or spiritual pride, or idolatry, or disordered loves, to use the language of Augustus. That's one thing.

A second thing that can happen with family systems theory is that triangles start replacing truth and authority. Family systems theory warns against taking sides and being triangulated. But The Bible often calls us to side with truth and to make clear moral judgments. Systems language says that everyone contributes to the system. But the Bible really points a finger at those who abuse others. When there's domination and false teaching, all of that can be reframed as systems dynamic. I'm not going to continue running down this road. I just want to again call us to discernment whenever we're importing something into our church and saying, "We're going to use this frame." Whatever is, and it's foreign to the scriptures, it carries with it a value system, a DNA, that's a different DNA than the DNA of scripture and the DNA that we have embraced in the Vineyard.

Here's quickly a third foreign teaching and that would be pragmatism. I think John Wimber was particularly sensitive to the problem of pragmatism. He was a very pragmatic leader and he constantly was evaluating whether things worked. But the ultimate criteria by which we measure God's will is not "Did it work?" John regularly warned against what he called the technocratic spirits. The idea was that, if we just could manipulate things, and we in our human wisdom and human strength, or human strategizing could come up with the right formulas, then everything would be great. We would have a growing, successful, thriving church. John said, "That's not it at all. We can't humanly engineer God's presence. The Lord is in heaven. He does whatever he pleases." (Psalm 115) This is a real issue and became a wedge issue between John Wimber and Pete

Wagner because Pete, despite his disclaimers, was really drinking from a different stream than John. John was drinking from the scriptures, and from radical dependence and radical obedience to the leading of the spirit. Pete was an engineer, and he was enamored by anything that was growing - anything that seemed to be working. He wanted to learn the principles that caused this thing to grow. And then, if we could distill those things down, we could then scale it to make it bring about success and growth everywhere. John wasn't an engineer. And he wasn't measuring things simply by whether it was working. He was asking questions about faithfulness to the king. Assuming that God's blessing is on anything that grows is simply a different gospel. We often see in scripture what looks like failure, but is the hand of God.

A last thing that has become more and more of a problem in the last 20 years, is what has occurred as a result of Pete's New Apostolic Reformation, and the importation of dominion theology and the fivefold ministry into charismatic churches worldwide and, to some degree, into Vineyards. Again, I would just encourage discerning hearts to see what we essentially find in the Bible. and what Vineyard really grasped from the Bible, and in contrast, this foreign thing of the fivefold ministry or dominion theology. I assume that many of you are familiar with the Latter Rain movement. It began up in Canada in 1948 at the Sharon Orphanage and Bible School, in North Battleford, Canada. It began with some key leaders who withdrew from the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. They began praying and fasting for revival, and they started to experience an outbreak

of prophetic utterances, and impartations through the laying on of hands. They brought forth this doctrine called the fivefold ministry. In this teaching, the descriptions of gifts listed in Ephesians 4 became understood as permanent offices with translocal authority. This has never been a Vineyard view. Vineyard's understanding was that what John would call "big A" Apostles were foundational to the church, but big A Apostles were limited in history. When I say foundational ministry, Ephesians 2:20 describes apostles and prophets as the foundation of the church, but foundations are laid once. They're not continually relaid. And big A, Apostolic qualification was historically limited. You had to be a witness to the resurrected Christ. But there's nothing in the New Testament that suggests that big A Apostles would continue through the history of the church. Authority in the New Testament is local, vested in the local elders, not translocal.

The fruit of all of this has been authoritarian leadership and overrealized eschatology. Vineyard is a different movement than the New Apostolic Reformation. For Vineyard, they said, "We're not a movement of Johnson, we're not a movement of apostles, we're a movement of pastors." John always rejected the notion that he was an apostle and had this restored governing office. He believed in missionaries and small A apostles breaking new ground. But, he objected to hierarchical apostolic governance, which then the New Apostolic Reformation institutionalized. In the Vineyard, prophecy was always seen as fallible. It was always to be weighed. We always discerned. There was no binding revelation for churches. Wimber regularly said, "We get it wrong sometimes."

John certainly never taught that there would be prophecy guiding nations. What we see in the NAR is prophetic words that are directional for movements and for nations, and for politics, and are strategic. Vineyard mostly limits prophecy to edification. The New Apostolic Reformation expands prophecy to governance. In the Vineyard, leadership is expressed through service, through humility, through prayer. Leadership is shaped by the cross. Wimber warned against control and manipulation and spiritual intimidation.

We're also very careful about our political engagement. Vineyard's DNA emphasized witness and compassion and justice at local levels, but it absolutely avoided dominion language. What you see in the NAR and dominion theology is the Seven Mountain mandates, political prophecy, and that we're going to dominate nations and political spheres and education and entertainment. These things are foreign spirits to us, and we need to be discerning. That's why understanding Vineyard DNA, if we really understand the genuine article, we will be increasingly sensitive to what's false.

	Cessationist	Prosperity/Pentecostal	Both-And/EE/Vineyard
Tongues	Ceased (Warfield) -Miraculous gifts designed to authenticate apostles -Miracles only 3 parts of the Bible -Accompany new revelation (Moses/Joshua, Elijah/Elisha, Jesus/Apostles)	Always initial evidence of gift (Charles Parham)	Often; one of the spiritual gifts, all charismata are evidence of the Holy Spirit
Healing	Very rare	Always if you have enough faith	Often
Basis of Healing	If God wills	Healing in the atonement, "By his stripes we are healed - healing is guaranteed"	Healing through the atonement -not guaranteed -Part of the in-breaking of the Kingdom
Demonic	On the mission field	Everywhere - blame Satan for everything	Spiritual warfare part of this present age -No strategic level spiritual warfare
Baptism of the Holy Spirit	At conversion	Doctrine of Subsequence -A second experience -Post-conversion	-No discernable Biblical principle -Tend to talk about multiple fillings by the Holy Spirit
Work of the Holy Spirit	-Convict the world of sin -Giving fruits of the Spirit -Seal of faith		-2 activities of the HS, conversion and empowering, can be simultaneous -Sometimes not needed to "activate the conversion experience"
Kingdom of God	Entirely future	Mostly present	Present and future -Need robust doctrine of suffering