WHO WE ARE

Last week I spoke about who I am, today I want to cover who we are as a church family.

We are image bearers of the almighty, we are His sons and daughters, we people of the kingdom, and we are a Vineyard Family. What does this family look like? I want to give you an outline of who we are as a family and will end off with an easy illustration of how you can remember this for when you invite friends and they ask what type of church you belong to.

JESUS IS THE HEAD

Col 1:18 Christ is the head of the church, which is his body. He is the first of all who will rise from the dead, so he is first in everything.

Christ was the Churches beginning, its source, its **head.** What is in a person head? A brain, right? Although looking at the state of the world today I wonder if some people even have one.

What is the brain? The brain is a complex organ that **controls thought, memory, emotion, touch, motor skills, vision, breathing, temperature, hunger and every process that regulates our body**.

Just as the parts of the body function under the direction of the brain, so Christians are to work together under the command and authority of Jesus Christ

BIBLE

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

The has authority above church councils and traditions, above reason, above experiences, and above personal viewpoints. The bible is the basis for a living encounter with God through the presence of the Holy Spirit. We proclaim and demonstrate the kingdom and the bible. John Wimber calls it the menu. We don't just read the menu, we order and eat, and pay (tithe) for our food.

KINGDOM

Mat 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

We interpret the bible through kingdom theology, it is our foundational biblical word view. The 'Already and Not Yet' of the kingdom. We do not live as Christmas and Easter Christians. Always focusing on the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ. He lived a certain way and being our example, we are called to the same. A lot happened between his birth and death.

WE DRAW PEOPLE INTO OUR COMMUNITY OF FAITH BY:

WORSHIP

Luke 10:27 He answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' ; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'"

We should have a lifestyle of worship, and I am not talking just about singing. Our worshipful lifestyles should be characterized by love and intimacy with God and a desire for His Presence. Form that springboard we love our neighbours as ourselves. And when I say neighbours, I am not talking about that difficult guy next door with the screaming kids and barking dogs (although him too).

The word for neighbour from the Greek is πλησίον PLĒ SION it means so much more than the person next door, it is means any person near, close by, a neighbour, a fellow man, countryman, Christian or friend.

WE DRAW PEOPLE INTO OUR COMMUNITY OF FAITH BY:

COMPASSION

Mat 9:36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Pray for compassion. I know I need to for myself. I often find myself in compassion fatigue. You read all that is happening on the news in our nation and around the world. Then you watch on Facebook as people post what is going on in their lives, both the joy and difficulties.

It gets tiring, doesn't it. It is hard to listen to someone who is struggling with a headache without thinking, if you just knew the week I have had! But when we see people's pain, truly, and engage with compassion we will draw them into relationship and community.

A friend Nigel Branken wrote the following which sums this up well, *"It's about compassion, standing in solidarity with the vulnerable, recognizing the divine in their struggles. Think of the many facets of Jesus - the weeping Jesus, the baby in a stable, the child refugee, the lost child, the homeless, the arrested, the beaten, the crucified. Each one invites us to see and love the human and marginalized Jesus."*

WE DRAW PEOPLE INTO OUR COMMUNITY OF FAITH BY LIVING WORSHIPFUL LIVES AND COMPASSION.

What does the church look like? And I am not talking about the building, there are four elements of church that are priorities and evident for us.

CHURCH IS A HOME

Act 2:46-47 They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, (47) as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.

We have lived in our home since my son Joshua was four years old, he is now twenty-seven. Twenty-three years in a home, we have come to know the sounds, the way the water runs out of different taps, which plugs will trip when overloaded. Which parts of the garden to plant fruit trees, and which parts to plant indigenous ones. The sounds our children made when getting up early when they were young, and getting home late when they were older. It is a place of love and joy, sometimes pain and difficulty, but it is our home.

Our church should be your home, as we live *exuberant and joyful* lives, sharing life together here, we become family and this is our home.

The Greek word for fellowship used here is Κοινωνια, KOINŌNIA means, community, participation, partnership, shared life, communion together… The modern Greek word I would use here is IKOYENYIA, meaning family…

Church is family in a HOME…

CHURCH IS A HOSPITAL

Mat 9:10-12 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. (11) When the Pharisees saw this, they asked

his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" (12) On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

Church is a place where we can receive healing. We are a grace-based community and seek to heal broken humanity; in whatever area it is needed. Healing is about bringing the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Greek word for healing ***SOTERIA*** means salvation, wholeness, deliverance, restoration, the total result of the work of Christ. That is what we mean when we speak of healing. John Wimber, in speaking of healing, mentions mental health, spiritual health, social health, and emotional health as part of the healing Christ brings.

Personally, I have been the recipient of this type of healing, but I have also seen the Holy Spirit work powerfully through me to bring healing to many people in many places. I was preaching at our national conference and felt that God wanted to heal people struggling with vision and hearing. People were healed, afterward a lady came and shared that her sight was completely restored. At lunch after the session a guy came up to me and said he was watching the live stream and was healed as we prayed.

Family, church is a home, it is a hospital and…

CHURCH IS A SCHOOL

2 Tim 2:2 You have heard me teach many things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Teach these great truths to trustworthy people who are able to pass them on to others.

Church is a school where we get equipped to live our lives for Jesus and to engage with His mission for our lives through our calling. When I started my journey with Jesus, I read the

bible and learnt so much, then I studied with Vineyard Bible Institute, Vineyard Institute, and more recently through Trinity Bible College and Graduate School. I learnt so much from going on mission trips, conferences, seminars and workshops as people and leaders came alongside me and showed me how to do the stuff.

I am not saying you must study formally, but when workshops, seminars, conferences, mission trips come up, join and learn. There are to many Christians that have been Christians for twenty years but remain one year old as Christians. We are called to be lifelong learners in our lives and faith.

Family, church is a home, it is a hospital, it is a school and…

CHURCH IS AN ARMY

Luke 4:18-19 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the downtrodden will be freed from their oppressors, (19) and that the time of the Lord's favor has come."

I never had this understanding of our faith until I started to study the bible and walk with Jesus. We actually get to do this stuff! Is that not exciting? Church is not a slot in our week, a nice Christian club that we belong to, and it hold little relevance to how we live our lives. We are God's army, and there is no plan B, you are it. You could be the only bible a person ever reads! And what we get to engage with has eternal consequences for the people we encounter. We are called to a living faith and for lack of a better phrase 'to be Jesus with skin on' to the world around us.

Family, church is a home, a hospital, a school and an army.

As a Vineyard church there are two ways in which we reach out to the world around us. Firstly through:

RENEWAL

Mat 28:18-20 Jesus, undeterred, went right ahead and gave his charge: "God authorized and commanded me to commission you: (19) Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (20) Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age." (MSG)

Jesus commands us to bring His life wherever we go. Do you know that you have the Holy Spirit indwelling you as a Christian? Do you know that as you go, Jesus is with you? When we enter a room, the very atmosphere changed because we carry the Presence of the King of Kings within us.

Have you ever noticed when you walk into a room and all of a sudden people stop swearing, there is a shift. I love John Wimber's story of standing at the baggage carousel at the airport waiting for his bags and a young lady comes closer and closer to him. Eventually she is standing right next to him, and he says to her, "Feels good, doesn't it?" she replies, "Yes, it sure does, what is it?" John responds, "It is Jesus in me?" and if I recall the story, he goes onto lead her to faith in Christ.

We reach out to the world through renewal and we reach out to the world through…

CHURCH PLANTING

Eph 4:11-12 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, (12) to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

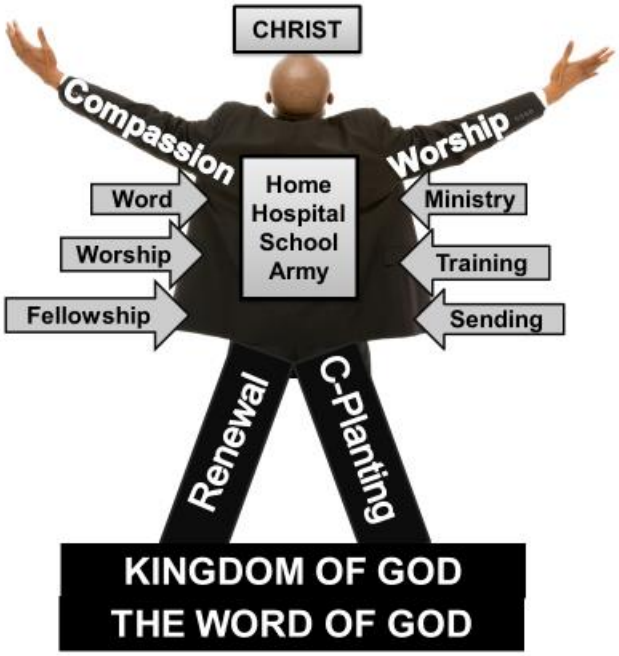
We want to see the Body of Christ built up, and we believe that that is done in communities through church planting. We want to be a church that plants churches that plant churches. We don't go, put up a tent, have a revival meeting, take our tent and leave. We commit to see a church established in an area.

Let me explain what I mean through an illustration. We had a lady who came to our church in the early days. Every Sunday she stood up and shared that many had given their lives to Jesus that week as she went into the marketplaces and hospitals. And the Lord bless her faithfulness. Week after week she shared, eventually I asked her where these people were fellowshipping, were they in church, what were their names, could we follow up with them for discipleship. She got offended and left the church. You see we are not called to get people to simply say the sinner's prayer, we are called to make disciples, and that happens in the context of a church community.

All of this is lived through our values of the Word, Worship, Fellowship, Ministry, Training, and Sending… But I don't have time today to unpack that.

YOU MAY BE THINKING BUT ANDREW!! This is a lot do you know what I have going on in my life?

No if and or buts my friends, this is the church life that we are called to. Allow me to close with a picture that sums all of this up together in a helpful way for us. This will help you remember who we are as a church family.


CHRIST
Compassion
Worship
Word
Worship
Fellowship
Home
Hospital
School
Army
Ministry
Training
Sending
Renewal
C-Planting
KINGDOM OF GOD
THE WORD OF GOD