

**POWER PRAYING: AN EVALUATION OF PRAYER  
MINISTRY IN THE TEACHING OF JOHN WIMBER AND  
THE VINEYARD MOVEMENT**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Prayer ministry evolved from John Wimber's five-step model for healing prayer. The one-to-one encounter practised in ministry time was the third part of the threefold structure in a Wimber Vineyard event.

Wimber's personal history included conversion in his late twenties, church leadership, and knowledge of church growth. He drew on colleagues to build a theology of worldviews, the kingdom of God, phenomena and experiences, and the supernatural. This thesis argues that using his undoubted charisma he profoundly influenced Wimber Vineyard communities, who take every opportunity to engage in prayer ministry. Wimber, often using his characteristic rhetoric taught that observable signs, phenomena and manifestations occurring during prayer ministry could be understood by the participants to signify the presence, activity and power of God.

Combining the research methods of participant observer and discourse analysis, I argue that Wimber's charismatic leadership style obscured the strong possibility that the power of God and the Holy Spirit, can become indistinguishable from human power. The analysis reveals that Wimber could be uncertain about conveying this model to all, and that he could seem to own personally the ability to heal. Drawing on insights from professional counselling, this research proposes that a greater awareness of the significant difference between prayer ministry (Gods power) and power praying (human power) should be recognised and acknowledged by current Vineyard leaders and an appropriate response made.

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## CHAPTER 1

### WIMBER VINEYARD PRAYER MINISTRY

#### Introduction

“You’ve had worship time, you’ve had coffee, you’ve had a doughnut, you’ve had the talk and then we all get to stand up and someone says, ‘Come Holy Spirit’. What happens next?

What is it that makes Vineyard different from perhaps other movements, perhaps other streams of Christianity? We do ministry times because that’s what God asks us to do. God shows up (5) and we take him seriously...so we’re going to do our first ministry time we’re going to talk about what the whoosh (6) moment is. Would everyone stand up please.

We want you to stay standing if you want a whoosh moment, if you feel like you need a touch from the Holy Spirit,(2, 6) remain standing.

Lord I just ask that you would come and that you would touch people and that people in this room would have that whoosh moment, would have that connection with you Jesus. Holy Spirit would you come and teach us about you” (2,5,6).

This thesis explores questions surrounding the possible meanings and significance responding and engaging in Wimber Vineyard prayer ministry or

'power praying' may have for, not only prayer responders<sup>1</sup> but prayer ministers, leaders and observers in the congregation. I argue through this work that there is a significant human element involved in 'power praying' and much less so when prayer ministry is in operation. In the analysis part of this thesis 6 discourses are identified as prominent themes running through Wimber Vineyard ministry. They are fully explained in chapter 6, but I outline them here and show where they are illustrated through this excerpt. 1, 'Science and Knowledge': a supernatural world view discourse, 2, 'Expectation and Suggestibility': a discourse of anticipation, 3, 'Leadership': a discourse of charisma, 4, 'What God Wants: God's desires and performance discourse, 5, 'Commanding God': a controlling discourse and 6, 'Phenomena': a discourse of mystery.

The initial quote comprises excerpts from a seminar which took place at the 2011 Vineyard UK National Leaders Conference called *How to Do Ministry Time or Kill Yourself Trying* (available as a podcast). Early in the seminar, the leader summarised the structure and content of virtually any Wimber Vineyard event, and then proceeded to ask some important questions. The excerpt continues,

"If you feel like you're having a moment, that He's with you at the moment could you put up your hand. Now more, more, bless them, bless them Lord, Lord turn up the heat, bless them (5). Lord I pray that in this final seminar they get what they came for, that they get their money's worth. ...more of you, and Lord I just pray that you will stay in this room, that you would increase your presence throughout the rest of this workshop (5).

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<sup>1</sup> I have used the term prayer responder to denote the one receiving prayer and prayer minister to the one offering prayer.

There is a moment when the Holy Spirit turns up (4), ...It is the moment when the Holy Spirit just clicks and you need to minister at that moment. ...A moment when He arrives (4) and suddenly the whole atmosphere changes, the whole temperature changes. Just be who you are but know there is a moment when the Holy Spirit actually turns up.

Right, let's practise that (3). What I'm going to ask you to do is to stay seated, close your eyes and we're going to ask God to give you words, but only the first couple of words, okay? So I'm going to pray and God is going to give you a word of some sort (4,5) and you can either speak that out, or you can practise it in your head before you speak it out, so I'm going to pray 'come Holy Spirit and give us some really definite, specific words (4,5), just the first couple of words so that we can step out and say, so come Lord.

Now there's expectation in the room, there's a level of faith in the room, there's expectation (2,3), God is here speaking (4). God is going to do something and so then this is a really good thing to do in front of people (4,5), it's a really good thing to do on Sunday morning, it raises faith (2), it's like God is here, He's going to do something (5). ...I think that might be for me...part of you resonated with some of those words. ...What you need to do, the rest of you is turn round and see who's got their hands up and pray for them.

The one you've just been doing is probably the one that Wimber set out. You know, you just ask somebody why they came forward for prayer then you would diagnose what their problem was and pray and give them something to go away with afterwards.

Why is it something that we tend to do well and tend to do a lot in the Vineyard?

It's a distinctive, gives us an edge". (D Smith and Smith, 2011, p. 148) (Appendix 2).

The content of this seminar demonstrates many of the features about prayer ministry that I explore and represents a contemporary example of the 'how to' associated with ministry/clinic times and prayer ministry. Much of the material drawn on in this thesis is not recent, but as I develop the storyline of prayer ministry, I will demonstrate that little has changed from the days when Wimber introduced ministry time and prayer ministry to Christians in the UK.

## **1. What Is Wimber Vineyard Prayer Ministry?**

Wimber's model of Vineyard prayer ministry was introduced to the UK at a time when there was palpable concern amongst Christians regarding the decline in church membership and the effectiveness of evangelistic methods tried so far (Brierley, 1991). When American evangelist and founding pastor of the Vineyard Christian Fellowship, John Wimber visited the United Kingdom in 1984 as the main speaker and teacher at the Third Wave 'Equipping the Saints' conference held at the Methodist Central Hall in London, this distinctive model of ministry was introduced into the U.K. Wimber was a jazz/rock musician and record producer who was converted from a heathen background to Christianity at the age of 29. He became a pastor, a time he found discouraging, and from there took a position at Fuller Evangelistic Association lecturing in Church growth at which he had become a self taught expert. During this time and influenced by the contacts he made at Fuller, he became heavily involved in the Charismatic movement. He developed the idea that miraculous works had a significant impact on rapid

evangelisation and used the term 'power encounter' to signify the conflict between the forces of darkness and the Gospel. Wimber held classes which included what he termed 'clinics' where students learned a model for healing and practised on each other. The dramatic occurrences in these classes made them very popular. After about 3 – 4 years Fuller ceased to host the class, but Wimber took the material and delivered it independently in the USA and around the world. Further details of his story are told later in the study.

At the time, Wimber called this model 'ministry time' (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 188) or a 'clinic' (J Wimber, 1985b). He explained in *Power Healing* (1986) that in the clinics he tried "to create an atmosphere that is clinical and rational" (p. 187), the idea being that emotionalism was reduced, hence the term. In practice, I am not sure that this always worked and I discuss this particular matter later in the thesis.

### **1.1. Power Evangelism**

By using this prayer ministry model, Wimber was also introducing his concept of power evangelism. "By power evangelism I mean a presentation of the gospel that is rational but also transcends the rational...The explanation of the gospel comes with a demonstration of God's power through signs and wonders.<sup>2</sup> Usually this [demonstration] takes the form of words of knowledge, healing, prophecy and deliverance from evil spirits. In power evangelism resistance to the gospel is

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<sup>2</sup> Signs and wonders is the catchphrase used in Wimber's teachings to describe the naturally supernatural, the actions and interventions of the Holy Spirit which include physical and inner healing and phenomena such as speaking in tongues, words of knowledge and other gifts and signs of the Holy Spirit.

overcome by the demonstration of Gods power” (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 78). I discuss this idea in more detail in chapter 3.

## 2. Renewal<sup>3</sup>

As well as the background of concern regarding church growth, there was also a groundswell of renewal. The thing that many, especially evangelical Christians were wanting was renewal – new life and vibrancy in their Christian lives which would lead on, not only to the growth of Christianity but also to the spiritual growth of their individual Christian lives. Renewal and sometimes revival<sup>4</sup> has occurred at various times and in various parts of the world over the last 3 – 400 years (Hocken 1986, Kay 2007). This era of renewal, that is an upsurge of interest in and activity of the Holy Spirit among Christians, which became referred to as the charismatic movement is traced back to the 1950s by Kay (2007). As Christians outside of the Pentecostal church started to experience renewal, often focussed at meetings convened for the purpose, Christians were prayed for to receive the Baptism in the Spirit or maybe for healing, gifts of the Spirit - speaking in tongues<sup>5</sup> as well as being slain in the Spirit (falling to the ground under the power of the Holy Spirit) would be the most likely gifts to be seen at that time.

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<sup>3</sup> Renewal, according to Kay (2007) is when those who were committed Christians, wanted to see denominational churches encompassing charismatic worship, prayer for healing, prophecy, spiritual excitement and so on.

<sup>4</sup> Revival is characterised by intensive prayer, continuous and exuberant praise, large numbers of converts and beneficial effects in the wider community Kay, W.K. (2007) **Apostolic Networks in Britain**. Milton Keynes: Paternoster.

<sup>5</sup> David Pytches described speaking in tongues as “spontaneous inspired utterance by the Holy Spirit, where the normal voice organs are used but the conscious mind plays no part” Pytches, D. (1985) **Come Holy Spirit. Learning to Minister in Power**. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

So the visit of Wimber with the new theology and ways of operating in both areas of effective evangelism and renewal fitted into what was already occurring in some parts of the Christian church in the U.K.

The focus of the Wimber conference was, as the title suggested, to equip the saints, in this case the conference delegates to operate in power evangelism by training them to heal the sick and perform signs and wonders (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 181). The demonstration and teaching of clinic or ministry time was an integral part of this training and was also a regular segment of a typical Wimber Vineyard service, meeting or event which would also include worship, testimonies and a teaching sermon (Cartledge, 2003, Steven, 2002). The delegates at this conference would certainly mainly be converted Christians already, so the stated purpose of power evangelism was not necessary – the delegates were used both as the focus for the ‘signs and wonders’ and as students training to operate in them. The event/meeting format and each component part is explored in detail in chapter 4 later in the study. The idea that Wimber felt that people could be trained to heal the sick and perform signs and wonders by using a model he had constructed and then taught is discussed in chapter 5.

### **3. Personal Memories – My Introduction To Prayer Ministry**

I was a delegate at this 1984 conference and remembered more about what the conference was like as a result of reading the observer account in Steven (2002). Towards the end of many of the sessions, following a time of worship and

teaching, the delegates were invited to stand and the leader, usually Wimber would, in the quiet, say 'come Holy Spirit', probably several times over. After a short while, I remember, there would be evidence of physical reactions or phenomena occurring from people around the venue, for example, heavy sighing, weeping, cries which sounded to me like cathartic expressions of distress, shaking, laughing, falling to the ground and so on. A ministry team, a group of people who accompanied Wimber from USA especially for the purpose, would pray over delegates who were exhibiting these above-mentioned 'phenomena' and also over those delegates whom team members appeared to single out because it was somehow sensed by them that the Holy Spirit was upon those identified. There was generally no specific request for prayer from these people, but receiving prayer would often result in an increase in intensity of any phenomena being displayed. Delegates who were wailing loudly were escorted from the main hall by members of the team. Some people were shaking or trembling and the eyelids of others were fluttering. Some looked warm with glowing pink or red faces. Some people's hands, arms or legs were shaking. This hand or arm shaking became a sort of hallmark of Wimber's ministry although I never saw John Wimber exhibit this behaviour himself. He was usually standing quietly on stage observing and then commentating and explaining to the delegates what was happening by describing and offering interpretation regarding the occurrences in the venue which he would most often attribute to the work of God and the Holy Spirit.

These conferences (there were others in subsequent years) attracted large numbers of Anglicans, Baptists and House Church members, where Wimber's

influence was strongest with Evangelical and Pentecostal churches also being represented in a smaller percentage (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 294).

John Wimber's primary contacts in the U.K. were Anglican and Baptist, namely David Watson from York, David Pytches from Chorley Wood and Sandy Miller and Nicky Gumble from Holy Trinity Church, Brompton, London, plus Douglas McBain from the Baptist Union who organised the 1984 conference (Kay, 2007, p. 168).

#### **4. Hopes For New Evangelistic Strategy**

Zichterman said that among the factors contributing to the wide reception of Wimber's ideas were his time on staff at Fuller Theological Seminary and his interaction with the other scholars there, the opportunity this gave him to travel extensively and gather principles of church growth from the places he visited and also that, "Wimber was blessed with what many perceive to be an appealing personality and exceptional communication skills, by which he made masterful use of humour, illustrations and pithy sound bites to make his message memorable and enjoyable" (Zichterman, 2011, p. 9). Wimber's humorous and frank style seemed to be acceptable to the UK church constituencies and their hope for effective evangelism strategies was rekindled as Wimber made direct links between New Testament and contemporary experience, challenging their western, scientific worldview – more of which in chapter 3. There was concern during the 1980s and 90s regarding the effectiveness of evangelism and the decline of church attendance (Brierley, 1991). Back (1986) said that "1984 was a unique year in the history of the Christian Church in England. No fewer than

seven evangelistic events were held in different parts of the country using the services of two of the world's best known evangelists – Luis Palau and Billy Graham" (p, 9). This upsurge of evangelistic activity was a response to an increasing awareness that there was little church growth especially among young people. I remember this concern as I worked for a youth evangelism organisation at the time. So there was appetite for learning new, more effective ways of attracting people to Christianity and the church. Wimber's style of evangelism was distinct from that which was on offer elsewhere which generally consisted of large scale rallies held in sports stadiums with well known professional evangelistic preachers who used altar calls to facilitate a response. Wimber was suggesting that healing and power encounters on the streets were far more likely to engage the unconverted and result in their becoming Christians. These ideas of Wimber's are discussed more in chapter 3.

## **5. 'Ministry Time' Taken Up By Churches**

One of the consequences of the ministry time experience demonstrated at the conferences (there were several held in different locations in the following years) was that many mainstream denominational churches incorporated a Wimber-style prayer ministry time into their worship services and set up prayer ministry teams for themselves. The practice that took root was that which was practised and demonstrated at the time of the conferences, that is Christians ministering to each other, rather than that which was advocated, that is, people who were not Christians encountering the power of God through signs and wonders, being convinced of Christianity and converted. So right at the start the stated purpose

of ministry time, the whole concept of power evangelism was compromised as there is no doubt that in very many churches prayer ministry was focussed on the members being preoccupied with praying for each other, usurping the intended model of signs and wonders evangelism which, on the whole, did not happen.

## **6. What Will Be Studied?**

The concept and practice of prayer ministry as taught by Wimber will be explored and studied by examining the history and growth of the practice in the UK in chapter 2 and detailing Wimber's life, theology and influences, looking for connections and explanations for how prayer came to be carried out in this way (chapter 3). Prayer ministry appears to be a visible and tangible response that all the other activities that occur in Wimber Vineyard ministries and events are geared towards. The response appears to be a vindication of all the preceding activity and so confirmation of success for the leaders and others involved. Whilst much has been written about Wimber and the Vineyard, so far there has been no in-depth evaluation and analysis specifically of the prayer ministry encounter between the prayer minister and the prayer responder. This thesis aims to explore what meaning responding and engaging in 'power praying' has for a prayer responder, prayer minister, leader and the observers in the congregation.

## **6.1. Prayer Ministry Encounter**

The actual encounter and relationship (albeit brief in many instances) between a prayer minister, the one offering prayer and a prayer responder, the one being prayed for will be explored looking for motivation; what people personally get out of this practice in terms of the structures and organisations that form and what the implications might be for those involved concerning the way they perceive they are being treated by God and the effects on their relationship with God. Raising awareness on all sides about what may actually be taking place will be an important outcome for me so that quality decisions may be made regarding prayer ministry practice. It is vitally important that God will not be forgotten in the mêlée of activity, which more often than not occurs in an atmosphere that is emotionally and spiritually charged. The risk that for some people in such atmosphere may be caught up and misplace the purpose of what is occurring, resulting in emotional and spiritual self indulgence is significant. The different possible impacts will be explored. Also, for others, the experience of prayer ministry is a significant and positive one, affecting a therapeutic environment which enables individuals to make important changes and move on with their lives in a way that is less encumbered and seen by them as wholly beneficial. The environments that make this more of a possibility will also be investigated. In addition the question of whether prayer ministry can become power praying will be investigated. Can the 'prayer ministry encounter' actually become an act that more involves crowd dynamics, group hysteria and human behaviour thus creating the possibility for damage, so more appropriately termed 'power praying',

or is it certain that God's power is the only power at work and so the term 'prayer ministry' is indeed the most appropriate one?

The main body of this thesis addresses these issues by, in the first chapter outlining justification for the study, the approach taken and an introduction to the methodology for the analyses carried out both in chapters 4 and 6. The second chapter summarises the history of the development of ministry time and prayer ministry through the theme of 'renewal'. I explain how Wimber and the Vineyard phenomena found their niche at a crucial point for evangelical Christianity in the UK at the time. The personality and personhood of Wimber is pivotal to how Vineyard operates and so in chapter 3 I give an account of his life and the development of his theology and practices, especially that of ministry time and prayer ministry, which at times could more aptly be termed power praying. Chapter 4 examines how the structure of Vineyard events was set by Wimber in order to achieve ministry time. Using participant observation of an example of a typical Vineyard morning service bears the structure out and demonstrates not only the three fold format but also the momentum building from the start of the service through the worship and testimonies and the teaching/talk towards ministry time, the climax of the majority of Vineyard events. I also consider Wimber's five-step model for healing/prayer ministry. Chapter 5 examines the five-step model in more detail and critiques three prominent features of Vineyard, words of knowledge, inner healing and demons. Chapter 6 is divided into two parts, the first explaining the methodology for the analysis and the second, undertaking the analysis for which I used a video series (available on YouTube) of Wimber teaching about and demonstrating ministry time and prayer ministry as

data. Here conference delegates are used by Wimber to show the 'how to' of prayer ministry and the responses and reactions of the delegates are captured and used by Wimber. This provided me with all round, primary sourced data on which to base my analysis. The concluding chapter discusses the whole thesis, some of the difficulties I experienced whilst engaging in the project and the subject of abuse in this context. I also discuss areas for possible change in practise and ideas for further research.

## **7. Why This Subject Is Important For Me**

During my late teenage years, having come from a conservative evangelical family I came into contact with Christians who had been 'Baptised in the Spirit', a personal spiritual event described by Ward as "an initial gateway experience of God...an initiation" [into the charismatic movement which preceded Wimber] (Ward, 2003, p. 197) and my own participation in this experience refreshed and renewed my Christian life. After qualifying as a nurse, I later worked for a charismatic evangelical Christian youth organisation and this brought me into contact with more charismatic Christians. I was also someone who others seemed to talk to if they had problems and as a result of this and my workplace connections, I was invited to become part of the counselling team (as it was then known) at Spring Harvest.<sup>6</sup> I have been a part of this team (now called the Pastoral Team) for many years and still am today. So I have been present and grown up through the evolvement of the charismatic evangelical movement and

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<sup>6</sup> Spring harvest was started in 1979 and exists to 'equip the church for action'. Through a range of events, conferences, books, holidays and other resources, Spring Harvest seeks to enable Christians to impact their local communities and the wider world. An all age, multi denominational event, it features Bible teaching, seminars and spirit filled worship. It currently attracts around 35,000 people each year. It's about one thing: deepening your walk with God, so you return home inspired to impact your community and your friends, for Jesus. SpringHarvest [online]. Uckfield Memorialife [Accessed April 29 2011].

subsequent introduction and development of Wimber's Vineyard prayer ministry.

I have gathered immense experience being part of these teams and have subsequently trained as a professional counsellor. It was as a result of both my involvement on the pastoral teams and my professional practice that led me to raise many questions about how prayer and ministry were conducted, especially when this either did not make sense to me or perhaps was too simplified. For example, having observed well known evangelists (there were many associated with the organisation I worked for) praying for others and asking why they prayed in the way they did – an answer often given I remember was “well, it works so I do it that way”.

A typical scenario might involve someone who appeared isolated and lonely, having been rejected (a common issue for many people), could be described by the one ministering and praying as having an ‘orphan spirit’ which would then be ‘cast out’ This would more often than not involve raised voices and commands directing the problem to be taken away by God. There might be an initial feeling of improvement in the person, who would have had little participation in the interaction, but it would seldom last as the reason for the feelings of isolation had not been addressed. The one praying would have moved on and probably never knew that any effect was temporary and in fact significant disappointment could result in the person receiving prayer as prayers had been prayed with no improvement. What could this mean for the person's Christian faith? Many times disappointed and frustrated people would feel that they were in the wrong because they were still in difficulty. Someone like myself would be aware of this

issue because people would make use of the pastoral facility provided at Spring Harvest, or seek further help in other ways, where it would become evident that they had been prayed for in the past and either there was no change or things were worse. I always admired the courage of those people who took the risk of seeking help again. The more I thought and prayed about the way this kind of praying was done the more I felt that there needed to be a significantly different and improved way for conducting these interactions especially when so much significance is attributed to the experience by the person asking for and receiving prayer. Often issues of a very personal and sensitive nature may be being raised by those asking for prayer and I felt that they needed to be treated with due respect and attention.

As part of my pastoral experiences at Spring Harvest and subsequently in my professional counselling practice, I have come across many for whom being prayed for in this way was experienced as abusive and traumatic and left them in a worse state than they had been before this kind of prayer, some awful things having been said and done in the name of God and ministry(Parsons, 2000). I have also come across those for whom being prayed for was an encouraging and helpful time which enabled them to move forward. Many testimonies are to be found in Vineyard and New Wine publications.

For the safety and benefit of all involved it is important to have an awareness of what it is that makes prayer ministry seem right and work for some people and what it is that can cause it to go wrong for others.

## **8. How May Prayer Ministry Be Studied?**

For 'prayer ministry' which occurs as part of the life of the charismatic evangelical movement and of Wimber Vineyard settings in particular, language and 'turns of phrase' peculiar to the movement are a feature. As language and turns of phrase, some of which are referred to above, play a significant part in the dealings of the people in this setting (as turns of phrase do in most groups), it seems apt to explore the whole area using a research method centred on language.

## **9. Introduction To Theoretical Framework**

### **9.1. Social Construction And Discourse Analysis**

Exploring the dynamics in Wimber Vineyard settings from a social constructionist perspective and using research tools associated with social constructionism such as discourse analysis makes sense to me. Postmodernism, the cultural backdrop from which social construction emerged allows multiple ways of seeing things and rejects the modernist notion that the world can be understood in terms of ultimate truths and hidden structures. It rather puts forward the idea that there are many different knowledges available to us through which understanding may come. These ideas are further explored in the methodology/theoretical framework chapter 6. The 'taken for grantedness' in terms of the in-house terminology in Wimber Vineyard settings can be exposed in different ways. Wimber Vineyard settings are environments where language and turns of phrase characteristic to it

are widely used. They are also environments that rely for their order and structure on their own 'common sense' and 'natural' way of seeing and understanding things.

I have chosen to do this research by exploring the background of Wimber Vineyard ministry and how it was introduced into the already established charismatic evangelical movement. The history of charismatic evangelicalism will be explored highlighting aspects that have subsequently been incorporated into Wimber Vineyard ministry, churches and church life. In particular the history and significance of prayer and pastoral ministry will be explored in chapter 2 to examine where and how Wimber Vineyard prayer ministry found a place. Data will consist of selected, transcribed parts of the video recordings of the classes which John Wimber and C. Peter Wagner taught based on the MC 510 classes held at Fuller Evangelical Seminary, explaining and instructing on the concept of ministry time, prayer ministry, power evangelism and power healing. I have also chosen to supplement this material by using podcasts produced from National Vineyard Leaders conferences, and quotes from Vineyard UK and New Wine<sup>7</sup> websites and publications which include the theme of prayer ministry. This data will be deconstructed looking for themes, consistencies, functions, inconsistencies, effects and outcomes. The popular texts and more recent in-house materials are likely not only to have been more widely read and influential

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<sup>7</sup> New Wine is a network of churches and believers across all denominations who share the same values of worship, teaching and ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a mission organisation with a vision to see the nation changed through Christians and churches being filled with the Spirit, alive with the joy of knowing and worshipping Jesus Christ, living out his Word, and doing the works of the Kingdom of God. They seek fulfilment of our vision by working with church leaders, hosting summer conferences for all ages, offering training. New-Wine [online]. [http://www.new-wine.org/about\\_us/](http://www.new-wine.org/about_us/) [Accessed May 14 2010]. New Wine was founded by Rev David Pytches who was one of the first British leaders to be in contact with Wimber and has largely adopted Vineyard style of church and ministry.

on thinking and practice in everyday church life than the few more obviously 'academic' texts written on the subject, but also in turn they reflect changes in thinking and practice over the time since the mid 1980s when this phenomenon was first introduced to the UK by Wimber.

## **9.2. Participant Observation**

I will also be using participant observation in chapter 4 to complement the main method of study as I look at the threefold structure of Vineyard events instituted by Wimber. As I have been involved and continue to be so to a lesser degree in Vineyard settings, it seems to make sense to use my own experiences and observations as part of the study and I have selected one of the services I had attended as data. Various authors (Burgess, 1984, Denscombe, 1998, Patton, 1980), have described participant observation and have categorised the method in four parts, that is 1, full or complete participant where the observers true role is undisclosed and he/she is assumed to be an authentic member of the group. 2, the participant as observer is where the role is not hidden but acknowledged as appropriate. 3, observer as participant where the observer role is completely open and accepted by group members and 4, the full observer where no participation in the group takes place.

Working as an observer in what for me would be familiar settings means adopting a more objective stance and taking care to note the familiar and routine, standing back when possible and as Steven (2002) said, "adopt an artificial naiveté by recording as much detail as possible about the people present and topics of

conversation regardless of their relevance” (p. 43). Advantages of this approach are its flexibility and the ability to gain information that an interviewer would not have thought of asking for. It is a naturalistic approach which the longer the observer is able to stay within the group, the less likely he or she is to distort or influence behaviour in that group. Richer and more insightful information can be obtained as relationships and trust develop. There is no need for complicated equipment, just oneself and a notebook and a schedule are all that are required (Denscombe, 1998, Kidder, 1981, Whyte, 1943). Disadvantages and difficulties with this method include the ethics of observing people without their express consent. However as Denscombe (1998) points out there are two arguments for doing covert research, no one suffers as a result, and no one is identified so ethical standards are maintained. Field notes may need to be written after contact with the group, so memory has to be relied upon. The validity of the data collected can be called into question and is more than likely un-replicable. Generalising from the results may be difficult (Denscombe, 1998, Kidder, 1981, Whyte, 1943).

## **10. Conclusion**

This is a multidisciplinary study, the subject material of which sits within the discipline of theology and the methodology used within psychology. The reason for making this choice is largely pragmatic. My academic background is that of psychology and psychotherapy and it is from this perspective that concerns regarding practises in this setting became an issue. Apart from being raised in a Christian family, I have no theological training and so attempting to use unfamiliar

theological methodologies would probably result in a less satisfactory outcome. Whether to attempt the study from within either the discipline of theology or psychology was debated at the outset of my study and I accepted the recommendations and advice given at the time.

During the development of Wimber Vineyard ministry either in newly established Vineyard UK churches or as part of mainstream denominational church life, a significant element has been that of prayer ministry. The concept that Wimber introduced was that of empowering Christians in the use of signs and wonders so that as they prayed for those who are interested in becoming Christians, they will be convinced of the power of God. The concept of the ministry time or clinic was introduced at the first 'Equipping the Saints' (1984) conference in the UK and involved the delegates who almost certainly would have been Christians being prayed for usually by ministry team members brought in for the purpose. Subsequently the delegates were encouraged to pray for each other. The practice that took root was that which was practised and demonstrated at the time, not that which was advocated, namely that people who were not Christians encountering the power of God in signs and wonders and being convinced and converted. It is difficult to know whether the two concepts have become confused but there is no doubt that as part of very many churches, the members are preoccupied with praying for each other. It is this encounter that is the focus of the study and I have chosen a theoretical background and methodology where this encounter may be explored and deconstructed with a view to raising awareness about what is actually taking place, its advantages, when positive and good things happen and also disadvantages, where things can and do go wrong.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRAYER MINISTRY**

#### **Introduction**

#### **1. The Development Of Prayer Ministry**

Christians have always prayed and have always prayed for and ministered to each other. The verses from the Bible often cited to support this activity read, “Are any among you suffering? They should pray... Therefore confess your sins to one another, pray for one another so that you may be healed.” (James 5:13 and v.16). The pastoral work of church leaders has always had a place of significance in the life of the church in general, however as explained by Ballard (2000), before the second world war pastoral work was a primarily practical discipline, focussing on matters such as how to make a household visit, illness, how to baptise babies, bereavements, marriages and so on. As professionalism was becoming more important during the mid twentieth century “the theory and practice of pastoral counselling began to dominate the pastoral training of Christian clergy” (Bunting, 2000, p. 383), which added to what they been previously taught (Ballard, 2000). This gave ordinands a more structured knowledge and skill base and developed into an assessable subject for Anglicans in the early 1980s. Other denominational training syllabuses followed suit. During this time other associations and foundations concerned with pastoral care arose, for example, the Clinical Theology Association (now called the Bridge

Foundation) started by Dr Frank Lake in the 1960s. Lake explored the links between psychodynamic theory and theology. The Westminster Foundation started offering counselling and counselling training. This was born out of the need for clergy, whose traditional clerical skills seemed to be losing their impact, to become more relevant in an increasingly professional world (Ballard, 2000).

One of the distinctives in the development of British pastoral theology and care is the way that this has moved outside the confines of the clergy. During the twentieth century the rapid increase and secularisation of knowledge concerning healthcare resulted in a diminishing role concerning the provision of such care for the churches. The pressure on the decreasing availability of clergy (Church Society) and “the rapid increase of lay involvement in the church’s ministry has eroded confidence in traditional pastoral ministry of the authoritarian clerical sort” (Bunting, 2000, p. 383). Many people engaged in pastoral care in Britain are not ordained and do not intend to become so. This can partly be accounted for by the emphasis on ministry gifts being available in and to all people, not just church leaders (Ballard, 2000, p. 66). However, there has always been some difficulty and tension between pastoral theology and care and pastoral counselling (Ross, 1999, p. 39). So how have these tensions arisen and how has the church understood the different areas of counselling, Christian counselling, pastoral counselling, counselling practised by Christian practitioners and pastoral theology?

Both pastoral care and Christian counselling have always utilised current psychologies but with the rise of secularism it is perhaps not surprising that

Christianity has developed its own theories said to be deeply rooted in the way God made humankind (Hurding, 1985). The ways that people and their troubles are understood has changed dramatically from the middle ages when it was believed abnormal behaviour (however that might be defined) could be attributed to a demon or spirit. Finding a way for the said spirit to leave the person was the treatment applied at the time. More recently mental or emotional disturbance (or abnormal behaviour) has more likely been attributed to illness and treated with either medication, a change in social circumstances, psychotherapy/counselling or a combination of these to facilitate recovery.

So how does pastoral counselling fare in this discussion? Lynch (2000) suggested that pastoral counselling could be defined simply as counselling conducted by ordained clergy. However, many practising counsellors would see clients troubled by spiritual issues and also, as I have said there are practising pastoral theologians who are not ordained who could also see a similar client group. As Lynch (2000) went on to explain, perhaps a more helpful way of looking at this issue would be by means of the context or setting within which these practitioners work, so a pastoral counsellor would be someone whose work, either paid or voluntary is within their affiliation with a particular church or organisation. How practitioners function would be shaped by the setting within which they work, not forgetting those who are self employed and so would be practising privately. This allows for a variety of approaches in practice. Some would understand their approach to be explicitly influenced by Biblical principles and expression whilst others would not use overt Christian or religious thought or

language, preferring the manner of their work to communicate implicitly God's love and acceptance of individuals.

This thesis explores prayer ministry/power praying in Wimber Vineyard and my focus is upon the scenario in this setting where one person, the prayer responder, looks to another, the prayer minister, for intervention, sometimes regarding specific issues and at other times, seemingly making certain that they were not missing ministry or blessing from God, often at the invitation of the leaders, by repeatedly asking for more prayer ministry (D Smith and Smith, 2011).

Wimber Vineyard as a setting for pastoral counselling is distinctly different from any others mentioned in this study. Christians are encouraged to go 'for ministry', often it would seem, just in case there may be something for them from God, or the prayer minister may be in receipt of a word of knowledge – information supposed to be directly received for them from God that would under normal circumstances be previously unknown to either party (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 204). It is of note that the terms used to describe this type of helping in the Wimber Vineyard setting are not those used in the more established churches and settings, that is pastoral care/counselling, but rather 'ministry' or 'prayer ministry'.

### **1.1. Prayer Ministry Or Professional Counselling?**

Prayer ministry, pastoral care or counselling are not the same disciplines even though they might be seen to share similar goals. Professional and pastoral counselling are disciplines for which a practitioner undergoes detailed and

extensive training and usually (although the profession is currently [2012] not regulated) counsellors work under the auspices of one of a number of professional bodies, the main one being the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). Professional bodies have ethical frameworks and professional standards<sup>8</sup> to which their members are expected to work.

The practice of prayer ministry is not counselling, nor does it try to be. Any training in prayer ministry offered is neither the same depth or detail as that of a professional counsellor. Wimber made a point of wanting the training he devised to be available to many, “I asked myself ‘Is it possible to develop a model for healing from which large numbers of Christians may be trained to heal the sick?’” (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 181). As previously mentioned, there was widespread use of ministry gifts already happening in other settings but it is also clear from what Wimber said that the kind of prayer ministry he was talking about focussed on divine healing, and incorporated involvement and encounters with power and as I will show throughout this thesis, supernatural power. Wimber said that he held equipping seminars “where everyone learns how to exercise the power of God” (p. 183). Training many meant that that increasing numbers of those in need could more easily access the attention, prayer and ministry they were looking for. Also, having many trained makes prayer ministry and divine healing more accessible in that there is a feeling of more equality between those who are prayer ministers and those who are prayer responders. Special arrangements or appointments in order to gain access to help are not needed.

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<sup>8</sup> Bond, T., Griffin, G., Casemore, R., et al. (2010) **The Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy**. Lutterworth: BACP.

As D. Smith and Smith (2011) said, prayer ministry happens at virtually every Vineyard event.

Does this prayer ministry scenario fit into an already known pastoral care or counselling system? I would suggest that in the main, it does not. So there is no intention here to measure the practice of prayer ministry against the practice of professional counselling. However, some of the skills used in prayer ministry are also used in counselling; listening and building a rapport for example. However, the ethical frameworks in professional counselling are designed to keep both client and counsellor aware of the possible pitfalls of entering into, albeit briefly, a relationship where at least one of the parties is vulnerable. For example, BACP Ethical Framework (Bond et al., 2010) (an extensive document) states that included in the fundamental values of counselling is a commitment to respect human rights and dignity, protect the safety of clients and ensure the integrity of practitioner-client relationships. So in the context of prayer ministry there is no intention to build a client-practitioner relationship as in professional counselling. Being involved in an encounter between, most often two people where one is vulnerable and the other is in the position of facilitating that person, an awareness of how respect, dignity and integrity might be compromised, against the best intentions of those involved, could be beneficial. So what, if anything may prayer ministry learn and draw upon from the practice of professional counselling in order to maximise its potential and minimise falling into the pitfalls that may be present? If, in order to protect their clients and themselves, professional practitioners need to have an acute awareness of the issues which need their proactive attention as they practise, would not those who are involved in a

practice where some of the elements involved in counselling are present also benefit from such awareness? Are there compromises that can and should be made in prayer ministry without risking to an unacceptable degree, the lives of those who access prayer ministry in good faith?

## **2. Some Influences On Prayer Ministry**

I have wondered if there are themes to be found in the background against which Wimber Vineyard prayer ministry has evolved and developed that contribute to how this style of practice came into being. To establish this I will outline the developments running through evangelicalism which have been stimulated by the constant undercurrent of renewal. I will then examine the influences and background on Wimber in order to see whether themes present in prayer ministry are reflected in his background and circumstances. I will start by exploring the theme of renewal and then highlight the phases through which expressions of renewal have gone within evangelicalism, which in itself has also undergone evolution.

## **3. The Story And Expressions Of Renewal**

The term renewal refers to times of increased spiritual awareness in the life of the church. When it has occurred in history it has often been accompanied by revival, large numbers being converted, some social reform, and emotional responses or enthusiasm. Jonathan Edwards (1703 – 1758) referred to these reactions (for example laughing, rolling, barking, jerking (Roberts, 1996) and

controversy. Regardless of this, renewal was sought, dreamed of and earnestly prayed for throughout history by Christians. It came, for example, in the Great Awakening in America, 1730s and 1740. The Second Great Awakening started in the early 1800s. In Britain there was the Methodist revival spearheaded by John Wesley in the 1700s and the Welsh Revival in 1904 (Evans, 1969). More recently in Britain, renewal (as opposed to revival) was signalled by an upsurge of interest in and activity of the Holy Spirit among Christians, referred to as the charismatic movement, the history of which has been traced back to the 1950s by Hunt et al (1997) and Kay (2007).

Individuals and groups of Christians have longed and prayed for a more vibrant and refreshing Christian life as opposed to their often more common experience of obeying rather stifling, negative and socially orientated rules, a hangover from Victorian times as Bradley told regarding evangelical children, "Virtually every enjoyable pastime was forbidden them on the Sabbath. Toys and games were locked away" (Bradley, 1976, p. 183). These rules which many churches since had been slow to drop resulted in a rather dour conception of Christianity and left Christians vulnerable to being called hypocritical and inflexible. In evangelical terms this was the period called conservative evangelicalism which I explore in more detail later. Indeed renewal in more recent times did seem to start finding expression in the 1950s. The people who were affected were mostly members, if not ordained clergy of the mainstream denominations, for example the Anglican and Baptist Churches. This was happening alongside the already established Pentecostal churches who held the belief that conversion is usually followed by a baptism in the Holy Spirit. This was a kind of initiation experience to gifts of the

spirit, particularly speaking in tongues which was seen by the Pentecostals as confirmation that baptism in the Spirit had in fact occurred. What started to happen at this time was Christians outside of the Pentecostal church undergoing spontaneous personal spiritual experience and renewal, not because they were looking or praying for it, but it just seemed to happen. Kay (2007) described how Michael Harper and Roger Forster were, independently of each other, converted whilst at Cambridge University and then both went on to experience the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit, speaking in tongues and so on for themselves. (pp. 8,111)

Having graduated from Cambridge University and following a short spell in the RAF, Roger Forster became an itinerant evangelist focussed on university missions. He started Ichthus Christian Fellowship in 1974 with fourteen people in his living room (IchthusChristianFellowship, 2011). Ichthus Christian Fellowship is described as a neocharismatic church (Kay, 2007) which now comprises twelve congregations and numerous affiliate churches in south east London and the surrounding areas.

Michael Harper became an Anglican clergyman and due to the conflict that the consequences of these experiences had on him and on his parish work left his Anglican ministry post and founded the Fountain Trust in 1964 (Kay 2007, p. 9). The Trust was set up to encourage Christians of all denominations to receive the power of the Holy Spirit. At its *ad hoc* meetings where charismatic worship<sup>9</sup> and teaching occurred, the people who attended were encouraged to return to their

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<sup>9</sup> Charismatic worship is characterised by a mixture of singing in tongues, bodily expressions of worship for example raised hands and arms, closed eyes, swaying, clapping and so on.

churches and congregations to spread this message of renewal rather than there being any thought of setting up yet another group. Local Christians were exhorted to expect renewal in the Holy Spirit and to pray for worldwide revival (Hocken 1986). This important movement always kept its focus on promoting renewal in the local denominational churches. The Trust closed in 1980, feeling its work to be done as vigorous renewal movements had been established in the main denominations (Kay 2007, p. 28).

In their own ways, Forster and Harper were instrumental in facilitating and spreading experiences of the Holy Spirit. During this time there were other Anglican clergy who had personal experiences of the Holy Spirit for example, Trevor Dearing and Colin Urquhart in whose churches manifestations of the Holy Spirit were occurring (KingdomFaith, StPaulsChurch-Hainault). As soon as Christians heard that the Holy Spirit was seen to be active where these people were ministering, they flocked to their services and meetings. This became incompatible for them with the work of a parish priest and so the trend was for these men to leave their positions in the church and start independent national and international ministries of their own. McBain (1997), speaking about experiences in some Baptist Churches said, "From these early years renewal meant an intensely personal spiritual encounter for ministers and lay people alike" (p. 45). Renewal was well under way and it is against this theme that we can begin to trace how prayer ministry developed.

Renewal – new life and vibrancy in Christian lives which, it was hoped would lead to the increased advancement of Christianity and also to the spiritual growth of

individual Christians was the thing that many Christians continued praying for. The publication of *The Cross and the Switchblade* (Wilkerson, 1963), an inspirational book that demonstrated the power of the baptism in the Holy Spirit in transforming the lives of drug addicts in New York, did much to widen the impact of renewal in mainstream denominational churches. More Christians outside of the Pentecostal church started to experience renewal, which was often focussed at the meetings which had sprung up where charismatic leaders were known to be. Christians were prayed for at these meetings to receive the Baptism in the Spirit and gifts of the Spirit, mostly speaking in tongues and healing. Being slain in the spirit would be manifest as part of what was happening. People would come forward from the congregation and line up in front of the leader or his (they were all men) team members who were also praying for those who responded. The longest queues would be in front of the person who was getting the most dramatic results, which meant by and large that people were being slain in the Spirit when they were prayed for.

Charismatic renewal, then, during the 1960s and 1970s was characterised by the experience of being filled with or baptised in the Holy Spirit, being slain in the Spirit and the practice of speaking in tongues, which could occur but was, whilst being sought after, not considered essential proof of the experience. This was where the theology of the Pentecostal church and the charismatic movement divided (Bebbington, 1989).

So this was when one on one prayer ministry started to become a recognised practice, albeit fairly restricted by there being little if any meaningful interaction

between the prayer minister and the responder. The practice became stereotyped, was mostly conducted by men who had quickly become charismatic figureheads in what was happening. As renewal became established as an experience for increasing numbers of Christians, as often happens, a more defined movement emerged from the then current conservative evangelicalism, that was Charismatic Evangelicalism. However, this whole subject area was and remains a story of renewal which can be tracked from before Conservative Evangelicalism to the present times as renewal is continually sought in one form or another and Christians seek higher, better, deeper, more intense experiences of God. This issue is discussed in more detail later in the thesis. It is to the precursor of Charismatic Evangelicalism, Conservative Evangelicalism that I now turn.

#### **4. Conservative Evangelicalism**

Before Charismatic Evangelicalism emerged, Conservative Evangelicalism was a distinct Christian movement. Evangelicalism in Britain dates back to the 1730s (Bebbington, 1989, p. 1) and, contrary to a commonly-held thought amongst evangelicals who would feel that their beliefs and doctrines have always been the same, has in fact changed and developed over the years. Although there have been many themes and trends that have been typical of evangelicalism as it has evolved into the movement that we have today, it would however, be fair to say that four characteristics have consistently undergirded evangelicalism. “There are the four qualities that have been the special marks of Evangelical religion: *conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression

of the Gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and...*crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Together they form a quadrilateral of priorities that is the basis of Evangelicalism” (Bebbington, 1989, pp. 2-3). Bebbington said, “Nothing could be further from the truth than the common image of Evangelicalism being ever the same. Yet Evangelicals themselves have often fostered the image” (Bebbington, 1989, p. 271). He further explained that the brand of Christianity as evangelicals believed it – that which was delivered to the saints – was unchanged in content as long as it remained loyal to its source. Bebbington suggested that this may be because in the early days of evangelicalism, there was much change and adherents could be in doubt themselves about what an evangelical was, and so the main characteristics as outlined above clearly emerged (p. 2). Evangelicalism was not a denomination but influenced existing churches in the eighteenth century. Nigel Wright explained that evangelicalism “is a diverse coalition of theologies, churches and ecclesial cultures” (N.G. Wright, 1996, p. 3). Randall told us that although there were different expressions of evangelicalism, existing movements such as Keswick and Pentecostalism “were influenced by dominant leaders who often reinforced a somewhat rigid traditionalism” (Randall, 1999, p. 8). Conservative evangelicals blamed modern entertainments, participation in sporting activities, especially on Sundays and various personal behaviours such as smoking and premarital sex, swearing and so on for the decline in religious practice and the ‘social gospel’ being seen as a diversion from the gospel to individuals. Tomlinson, discussing this area, highlighting the stark divide between the lifestyles of Christians and non Christians, told how one man who had been dramatically converted and was “entirely uncultured so far as Christian behaviour

was concerned” came into conflict with the established members of his church. The man concerned said that “joining the church was like joining a very exclusive club” (Tomlinson, 1995, pp. 40,41). Given that Evangelicals are a group very concerned with preaching the Gospel and seeing conversions, the church being a difficult place for newcomers to inhabit can be a problem.

Whilst the four ‘deposits of faith’ conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism had considerable permanence, the expression of these characteristics had undergone change. The matter of how the scriptures are held probably attracted more diverse debate than the other deposits as instruction and direction for those three items would be sought from the Bible which is why I choose to briefly mention the place of the scriptures here.

#### **4.1. The Place Of The Scriptures In Conservative Evangelicalism**

Biblicism is one of the cornerstones of evangelicalism. The example given for devotion to the Bible is taken from Jesus Himself as He quoted scripture as the word of God. Divine inspiration and supreme authority of the scriptures is accepted (Calver and Warner, 1996). Debates have surrounded biblical infallibility and inerrancy and the authority of the scriptures has always been under attack. “Defending this unique revelatory authority and clarifying the nature of biblical inspiration remains a continuing evangelical priority” (Calver and Warner, 1996, p. 69). Calver and Warner went on to explain that fundamentalist evangelicals would be hostile to modern theology, would place a heavy emphasis on the inerrancy of the Bible, have a literalistic approach to biblical interpretation

and exclude those who do not agree with them, whereas non fundamentalists will argue for “a more subtle and nuanced understanding of biblical inspiration” (p. 69). Whatever the shade of evangelical views on the scriptures, they are strongly held.

The developing socio-economic and political conditions affected evangelicalism in ways that made a profound difference to its size, self-image, strategy and teaching. Practices and beliefs have reflected the cultural and social environment, no more so than more currently. Joel Edwards, a former General Director of the Evangelical Alliance said, “While our unity will always be vital to our witness,...our unity must be the vehicle for a greater purpose: the transformation of our society. An Evangelical Alliance fit for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will not only stand for biblical unity, but must also seek to become a movement for change” (Edwards, 2000, p. 16).

From conservative evangelicalism, which had the image of being rather lifeless, influenced by restrictions on social activities and because of the burgeoning impact of renewal, charismatic evangelicalism later evolved.

## **5. Charismatic Evangelicalism**

Charismatic evangelicalism was an offshoot movement that developed out of conservative evangelicalism which as Randall (1999) said, struggled for authentic expressions of spirituality. The emergence of new movements was not uncommon as Christians sought to develop their spiritual lives and so often

needed new spiritual homes, that is groupings of like minded Christians who could express their new found spirituality together, freely. As Wright also said, this trend was more general; “Charismatic experience is by no means limited to evangelicals but it is particularly influential among them” (N.G. Wright, 1996, p. 8).

The development of charismatic evangelicalism has been well researched and documented (Bebbington, 1989, Hocken, 1986, Randall, 1999). It is also well documented, particularly by (Walker, 1985, 1998) that since the 1960s, there has been renewal in Britain as distinct from Pentecostalism. A widening rift developed between Pentecostalism and charismatic evangelicalism mainly regarding whether it was considered essential that baptism in the Holy Spirit was confirmed by the gift of speaking in tongues being manifest at the time (Kay 2007). More recently Anglican and other denominations were involved in the practice of speaking in tongues which escalated during the 1950s and 1960s as did the use of other spiritual gifts. Charismatic evangelicalism was again cross denominational and all these movements and developments intermeshed and crisscrossed over time and other boundaries (N.G. Wright, 1996).

For all those who entered into charismatic evangelicalism, life within the movement took on a character of its own. Worship style and expectation of personal involvement and relationship with God and the Holy Spirit became the norm. Parachurch organisations took on a new profile. Some were already in existence but were revitalised by renewal experiences for example, British Youth for Christ. New initiatives like Spring Harvest which at its outset was charismatic

in nature and part of a mechanism whereby charismatic worship ideas and lifestyle (church leaders did not always appreciate enthusiastic congregation members returning home with lots of new worship songs) were dispersed among churches new to the movement (McBain, 1997). Charismatic evangelical style is characterised by an interest and involvement in renewal, worship, spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues and prophecy, emotional, spiritual and physical healing and deliverance.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, Wimber became a key player influencing the development and wider acceptance by more mainstream denominational churches of the charismatic evangelical movement in Britain. Since this time, further developments regarding the experience of renewal have been cited by Ward, who explained that in the early days of renewal in Britain, an initial experience of God was characteristically expressed in either the baptism or fullness of the Spirit as a specific, almost like a rite of passage. He suggested that during the 1990s baptism in the Spirit as an initiation into the movement was largely replaced by regular encounters and intimacy with God in worship. He contended that the young people attending renewal type festivals in the mid 2000s would probably never have heard of the baptism or fullness of the Spirit, rather they would have been invited to meet God in an intimate encounter in worship (Ward, 2003)

### **5.1. Prayer Or Counselling In Charismatic Evangelicalism?**

Because of the whole concept of renewal and spiritual growth, charismatic Christians were praying for each other in a more in-depth way, addressing issues that were personal problems and difficulties rather than, up till this time, praying for the experience of renewal. As part of the prayer/counselling team at Spring Harvest, where there was a concentration of expectant people, spiritual activity and the desire of many to continue growing in the Holy Spirit was palpable. My experience was of delegates looking for help with issues that they perceived were acting as blockages to their spiritual development (M. Pytches, 1988). The counselling and prayer ministry that took place at Spring Harvest during the 1980s and early 1990s was mostly undertaken by people (including myself) who were untrained, but were gaining personal experience in an evolving ministry. Considering the kind of issues that were being raised by delegates which included everything from feeling that their quiet time was not going very well to gross sexual abuse, and even occasional stories of spiritual abuse as Christians seeking help with problems from their churches, were subjected to having numerous demons cast out of them as a solution to whatever was troubling them which resulted in them being deeply traumatised because of the way they had been treated. This process was usually carried out by a group of men using raised voices in long sessions and the original problem with which the person concerned came with probably remained unaddressed. Indeed, occult and deliverance seminars were still being held at Spring Harvest during 1990 (interestingly being led by Faith Forster (Roger Forster's wife) and according to a report in the Sunday Times Magazine, nothing was being said or done to address

personal issues, but the “possessed” were prayed for en bloc and noisily (Cotton, 1990, p. 49). Without doubt, we were ill equipped to be dealing with such matters and on the whole, met the challenge in a relatively simplistic way with the basic knowledge we thought we had. Demand for ministry would definitely have been a factor, not just at events like Spring Harvest, (where Cotton described people being shoehorned into a marquee, p. 49), but in many places as Christians sought answers to their perceived problems and expected ‘ministry’ to be part of the process and on offer at these type of events. This meant for many, the dramatic praying away of an issue and little personal responsibility expected to be taken by individuals. Although he was talking in the context of Restorationism, Tomlinson made a pertinent point that can easily be generalised when he said, “It also became clear that the experience of the Spirit was no cover-all solution for people’s individual problems and that deeper pastoral needs could not be met through enthusiastic glossalalic intercessions and the laying on of hands” (Tomlinson, 1997, p. 29). The rather simplistic expectation of many at these times was further illustrated for me on one occasion when, as I recall a woman who asked me to pray that the Lord would take her spirit of lust away. Wright suggested that it was the writers such as Bill Subritzky, *Demons Defeated* (1986) and Frank and Ida Mae Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor* 1973 who popularised the concept of referring to a wide range of human problems by the term ‘spirit (or demon) of ...’ (N.G. Wright, 2003, p. 108). Derek Prince also conceptualised compulsions, addictions, illnesses and emotional disorders in terms of spirits or demons of, for example, fear (Collins, 2011, p. 92). As Wright also said, there was a point where it was understood that humans are more complex than this kind of approach allows for (p. 115), and for me to concede to her request was

unlikely to help her. I declined as politely as I could to pray this rather stark prayer, further suggesting that we could talk and pray about what the cause of the problem might be and that personal responsibility regarding this issue might be a factor for her. She said she would go and find another counsellor!

The impact of eschatological thinking deserves particular mention at this point as in Wimber Vineyard the ideas around eschatology were profoundly influential and can be seen as underpinning the motivation for the creation of the movement.

The air of expectation of revival and an outpouring of the Holy Spirit which was so typical of the Charismatic Evangelical movement had another important effect, in that it fed into the prominence of eschatological thinking at the time.

## **6. Eschatological Issues**

### **6.1. Eschatology And Wimber**

Christ's coming again was and remains a powerful motivating ideology for evangelicals and talk of the ending of the world was an evangelical distinctive (Tidball, 1994) which resulted in the 'social gospel' being relegated way down the ranks of importance. Preaching the Gospel of salvation had always been the priority for evangelicals. Global events such as wars and rumours of wars, earthquakes, volcanoes, social unrest and so on were interpreted apocalyptically, contributing to the feeling among fundamental and conservative evangelicals that the end of the world was near and scripture was being fulfilled. The end of the twentieth century saw huge speculation on this subject especially in America,

which I witnessed myself when I was in USA, during a visit to a Baptist Church in Texas in 1999 where the beginning of the new millennium and the implied end of the world and return of the Lord was used as a threat by the minister there to get people to respond to what was being preached. I explore this further when I examine how Wimber developed the theology of the Vineyard in chapter 3: section 6. As Hunt (1995) explained, there are different factors that fed into this thinking; the practice of spiritual gifts and signs and wonders had the effect of making heaven seem closer as the supernatural was demonstrated this way. This in turn gave a sense of closeness to God, thus feeding the desire in Wimber Vineyard adherents for the final coming of the kingdom of God (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 40). There have been different ideas prevalent in Wimber Vineyard which connect with this theme, for example those of holiness and purity, repentance before God (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 90) and later, intimacy in relationship with God. All this helped to generate the view that a powerful visitation from the Holy Spirit heralding the end times, the final coming of the kingdom of God could be expected. The air of anticipation was continually fed through the eschatological teaching on which the hope of revival was built, according to Hunt (1995). This eschatological framework underpinned the expectation of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit or revival when all would fall before God in repentance and commitment to Him. Supporting this expectation there were the signs of different activities of the Holy Spirit, for example, physical healing and the perceived need in adherents to spiritual and emotional problems being overcome which would be seen to advance the coming of the kingdom of God. This reflects an observation that Wimber Vineyard adherents can tend to be inward looking and preoccupied with themselves (Hunt, 1995). All this is in

preparation for the last big revival which would precede the second coming of Christ. So as Christians worked more diligently towards their healing and perfection, Christ's second coming and the establishment of the kingdom of God were hastened. Whilst the kingdom of God would be seen to be finally established with Christ's second coming, Wimber argued that the kingdom could break through in the present time when, given that God had room to act through the faith of believers and supernatural phenomena, signs and wonders were evident. Wimber referred to this as the already and not yet (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 168). The kingdom of God is a kingdom of power eventually overthrowing the controlling power of Satan which, according to Wimber when healing occurred, Satan was robbed of a bit of his power. How Wimber established his thinking and theology is discussed in the next chapter.

## **6.2. The Wider Picture**

As I try to summarise the significant element of eschatology among Wimber Vineyard Christians a degree of confusion is evident. Attempting to draw upon the writings of Wimber has resulted in a lack of clarity regarding eschatology for me which I do not doubt is reflected in what I am writing. In evangelicalism more generally there has been a mixture of strongly held interpretations on the matter of Christ's return and this has resulted in division. As Calver and Warner said, the one theme that is consistent throughout is that somehow and at some time, Christ is expected to return in some form, be it bodily, or as of the ruler of the kingdom of God and that this will constitute a climax for many Christians and that this event will probably be accompanied by the end of the world. The timing and

nature of the second coming was a controversial matter for evangelicals generally and often accompanied by heated debate, but according to Calver and Warner (1996) these debates have largely fallen from prominence, not necessarily because matters have been resolved, but because living in the now was seen to be more important than arguing. "We know that Christ is coming again, as judge of every woman and man, but as to the specifics, many are now more willing to conclude that these are beyond our present capacity to know or interpret with the precision once presumed" (Calver and Warner, 1996, p. 63). So this matter is no longer as divisive among evangelical Christians as it once was.

The 1970s were fast moving, confusing and turbulent times for evangelical Christians and the new groups which often sprung up. The Restorationist Movement was one of these and it is to this significantly distinctive group, in which the structures of church life and the philosophy of pastoral care and counselling became increasingly controversial, that I now turn.

## **7. The Restorationist Movement**

As Christians defended what they felt was right regarding their relationship with God and the Holy Spirit and how it should be expressed, some stayed in their original churches but others felt they had to leave to join new groups, which was stressful and agonising for many of those involved (Tomlinson, 1995). These new groups which formed, with their leaders who became prominent and then known to each other during the early 1970s started to become the identifiable

House Church Movement<sup>10</sup> (N. Wright, 1997). As charismatic expression became more commonplace, but was largely being encouraged in existing churches rather than new groups, the resistance came as some house church leaders felt that 'church' should be something distinctly different. These leaders came together "to consider how to restore the pattern of a church life found in the New Testament" (Bebbington, 1989, p. 230). As a result, Restorationism came into being (Walker 1998).

The origins of Restorationists have been traced back to independent evangelicals, mostly Brethren in background who felt that the pattern of church life found in the New Testament should be restored. Walker (1998) has described this process in detail. A group of men which included Arthur Wallis, Bryn Jones, John Noble, Barney Coombs, Gerald Coates and a number of others felt that they were being used by God as the sort of leaders, that is apostles and prophets found in Ephesians 4:8-12, through which He would restore the church. Walker explained that these men wanted to be seen as creating a community that emulated the kingdom of God as closely as possible and that was run according to God's order and will. He further explained that eschatological thinking motivated and inspired the development of the churches lifestyle as they prepared for an outpouring of God's Spirit culminating in the establishment of a kingdom fit for the return of the King. This thinking was more prominent in Restorationist churches where the vision was that denominations would be replaced by the kingdom of God which would cover the earth prior to the second

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<sup>10</sup> The term 'House Church Movement' was one which embraced numerous expressions of house church, for example New Frontiers, Pioneer, Team Spirit and Restorationism.

coming. The Holy Spirit would restore the church where Christians lived in a kingdom run according to God's will.

Similar thinking was occurring among a group of men based in the USA known as the 'Fort Lauderdale Men' (Tomlinson, 1997, p. 31), who were in turn influenced by Watchman Nee (Moore, 2003). This group were sometimes referred to as the 'Fort Lauderdale Five'; they were Bob Mumford, Derek Prince, Charles Simpson, Don Basham and Ern Baxter. But there were not always five in this group. They started as four in 1969 publishing New Wine Magazine<sup>11</sup> together, being joined later by Baxter and John Poole in 1974. There were other changes in personnel during the time they were together and sometimes they were fewer in number and at other times more (Moore, 2003). The dynamic preaching of these men when they visited the United Kingdom convinced many that submission to 'divinely appointed' shepherds was the way forward (Walker, 1998 p. 40).

Shepherding was the term that was adopted by Restorationists referring to a system of pastoral care and was probably first introduced as such by the Americans. It was based on the New Testament picture of leaders being the shepherds to the flock of God. It claimed to be a present day interpretation of the sort of pastoral care that existed in the early church (Tomlinson, 1997).

Tomlinson noted further how dramatic tales of spiritual warfare and graphic stories of the end times battle between God and Satan were told along with the message that the only safe place to be was under the 'covering' (or being submitted) to one of God's shepherds. Such tales and scare tactics seem, sadly, have been not infrequently used as a tool of control in Christian groups.

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<sup>11</sup> New Wine Magazine was dedicated to sharing the message of restoration. Moore, D. (2003) **The Shepherding Movement: Controversy and Charismatic Ecclesiology**. London: T&T Clark International.

Tomlinson observed how, “a strong apocalyptic vision frequently becomes an effective tool for the control of groups of religious people” (Tomlinson, 1997, p. 31). (This is not a recent phenomenon. My father told a story of when he was a boy, his mother would tell him that he could go as far as the crack in the concrete road on his bike. Should he think of going any further, he should remember how he would feel if the Lord returned to find him on the wrong side of the line!)

Tomlinson (1997) further spoke of how, at events like Dales Bible weeks,<sup>12</sup> thousands were convinced by the spellbinding oratory of visiting senior statesmen like Ern Baxter. Baxter stated that Restorationist adherents should submit to ‘divinely appointed’ leaders. This would foster a belief in those people that as leaders, what they had to say came directly from God, a consequence of which was that they became unchallengeable. Celebration events helped raise expectation of revival and fostered the feeling that they were part of a massive movement. At these celebrations God would be seen to heal the sick and deliver from the demons that resulted from sin. The leaders determined whether the problems or sins of individuals were of demonic or of other origin. There was considerable pressure on members to stay in the movement – leaving would result in them being under attack and sniped at by the devil. Demons were perceived to be everywhere and ruled the outside world making it seem like a very frightening place. This resulted in people inside the movement becoming

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<sup>12</sup> With an increasing hunger amongst Christians in the UK, Bible Weeks had started to become an annual phenomenon. The first Downs Bible Week was started in 1979 with 2900 people attending. 1991 saw the first *Stoneleigh Bible Week*, which grew to around 26,000 people by 2001, the last of its kind in the UK. Stoneleigh's influence went way beyond the small village that gave it its name. It became a key fixture in the Christian calendar in the UK and drew well-known speakers from across the world. Over the ten years hundreds had become Christians and were baptised in the Holy Spirit. There were also hundreds of people miraculously healed, not to mention the millions of pounds raised for new initiatives and the poor of the world. These events have helped expose churches in the *New Frontiers* family and beyond to a big prophetic vision of God's purposes. The Stoneleigh Worship album regularly became the best selling album of it's kind around the world. ([www.newfrontierstogther.org](http://www.newfrontierstogther.org))

anxious about the prospect of venturing out into the secular world (Tomlinson 1995, p. 123). These observed characteristics in Restorationism were at their peak in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Tomlinson (1997) has explained the development of house church structure and leadership styles in charismatic evangelicalism which helps to explain how the leadership evolved to its state at that time. During the 1970s and 1980s many mainstream denominational church-goers were becoming disillusioned with church life, feeling that there was a lack of room for the activity and work of the Holy Spirit. Moore said, “Since the charismatic renewal in part was a reaction to the lack of spiritual experience in the historic churches, many charismatics responded not only by leaving their churches, but also by casting off any sense of ecclesiastical polity, tradition, or restraint, making themselves vulnerable to confusion and deception” (Moore, 2003, p. 43). Peter Brierley<sup>13</sup> has described how the 1980s saw the burgeoning of the so-called House Church Movement. “Initially these were groups of people from established churches meeting in the home of one of their members, but their growth meant that by 1986, 98% were meeting in halls, hired buildings, cinemas or redundant churches (**UK Christian Handbook**, 1986, p. 139)”. “In the 1980s the House Church Movement attracted 40,000 people: this more than doubled over the next ten years” (Brierley, 1991, p. 18). Brierley added in his interpretation of the church census figures, that as the Baptist and Pentecostal churches numerically declined between 1979 and 1985,

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<sup>13</sup> Peter [Brierley] was the director of Christian Research from 1993 to 2007, and prior to that director of MARC Europe for 10 years. Those two organisations undertook a huge range of different types of research, locally, nationally and internationally. Of particular importance was the undertaking of national church censuses when every church in England, Scotland or Wales was asked to give details of numbers attending on a typical Sunday. Brierley also believes in interpreting research. He has written ten books explaining the results of key research projects, as well as giving the implications of the findings, and how these might be applied in church or Christian agency situations (<http://www.brierlyconsultancy.com/about.html>)

the Independent Churches (the statistical group to which House Churches were allocated in the survey) grew especially fast. “Almost certainly these are interlinked since a number of Baptists joined the House Church Movement in the early 1980s and several Assembly of God and Pentecostal Churches left their formal association and became House Churches” (Brierley, 1991, p. 38). Brierley further explained that this data suggested a definite transfer of churchgoers from two denominational groups to a third, but the increase in the growth of the Independent group was five times greater than the number of the decline in the two denominational groups.

Wright related that because of the high profile events and Bible Weeks, which allowed those who attended to participate in a new-found excitement, this distinct movement became identifiable. He suggested that few of those involved initially grasped the Restorationist philosophy that lay behind this burgeoning movement. There were for the leaders, two fundamental realities, ‘covenant relationships’ and ‘apostolic ministries’ (N. Wright, 1997, p. 64). The leaders were set aside for prophetic and apostolic ministry in the end-time church. Dave Tomlinson described what happened to him in his early days in the Restorationist Movement, “Before long, I developed an itinerant ministry within the house church movement and by 1975 I was recognised as an apostle...by the influential grouping of men already accepted as apostles” (Tomlinson, 1997, p. 27). This group saw themselves as “the Church” rather than a denomination or group, where the people were to be the rulers in the kingdom of God, and where it was understood that to be a ruler was to learn to obey. Adherents were expected to follow God and His anointed leaders, abandon individualism and self-interest and

become accountable to His chosen leaders (Walker, 1998, p. 149). Apostles, prophets and elders, who were considered to be divinely appointed ran the movement. The aim of this discipleship strategy was to ensure that everyone was open to correction and admonition in the context of loving relationships. When members submitted themselves to those in authority, this submission was seen to be as though to God Himself (Walker, 1998, pp. 160-161). To make this discipleship structure work was not just down to the authority of the leaders but also depended upon the acceptance and cooperation of the members (p. 178).

### **7.1. Restorationist Authority And Leadership**

Powerful leadership was a prominent feature of Restorationism. Arthur Wallis, Terry Virgo, Bryn Jones and Keri Jones, (Turner, 1989, Walker, 1998) were strong, high profile figures who took hold of the reins and directed their churches as they felt God was leading them. The direction, rules, shape and motivation for what occurred was determined by these, mostly home grown, male leaders who led according to their interpretation or understanding of what they felt God had told them.

Another very important area to note, though not the focus of this study was and is the role of women. In Restorationism, women were not permitted to hold the position of apostle and those who head up and run the movement may only be men (Walker, 1998, p. 190). The current (2012) predominance of male leadership is confirmed on the New Frontiers website, "Paul tells us that when Jesus ascended He 'gave gifts to men' (Eph. 4:8)". (The New Revised Standard

Version of the Bible translates the word 'men' as 'people'). "Within the New Frontiers family we recognise these gifts as vital for fulfilling our mission. We are working with teams of gifted men serving existing churches as well as emerging church plants... Many of those who have been Terry's 'sons' now have significant spheres of relationship of their own becoming 'fathers' in their own right and, through them are fulfilling the mission of New Frontiers" (NewFrontiers, 2011). According to the website, women may train as leaders, but plainly not the higher office of apostleship.

A church faced with a powerful, apparently authenticated, high profile leader with lots of charisma who would make pronouncements such as 'God has told me to tell you...' or 'this is what is meant by such and such a passage of scripture' or 'God wants this or that for you', would not initially entertain the notion of challenging or questioning them, and subsequently, in this context questioning or challenging the leadership by group members became very difficult. Tomlinson, drawing on Weber said that, "Weberian charismatic authority has no mechanisms for appointment or dismissal, no career structure and no training or qualifications – a very accurate description of the kind of leadership that emerged...among the house churches" (Tomlinson, 1997, p. 29). Michael Harper, founder of the Fountain Trust in an interview published in *Renewal Magazine* bore this out when he was quoted as saying "the Charismatic movement and the Pentecostal movement have raised up some leaders who are above any kind of correction" (Stanton, 1992 p. 36).

In the desire for a balance between Spirit and structure in the new House Churches, the 'shepherding' leadership style became established. This entailed a believer submitting to a personal lay pastor or shepherd. Each lay pastor was submitted to another pastor in a kind of chain of command, with a senior or presiding pastor overseeing a local church or network of pastoral leaders. Each presiding pastor was submitted to one of the overall leaders or his designate (Moore, 2003, p. 2). This style was influenced in numerous ways, for example by Watchman Nee a respected and prominent leader at the time who said, "Whether the one in authority is right or wrong does not concern us since he has to be responsible directly to God. The obedient needs only to obey and the Lord will not hold us responsible for any mistaken obedience" (Nee, 1972, p. 71). As Tomlinson pointed out, a strong and "outrageous" opinion, nevertheless it succeeded in entering the mind-set of many house church people, not least because of the distinction Nee drew between official and bureaucratic authority (that which arose out of human appointment) and what he called 'spiritual' authority (that which arose out of divine appointment or a divine 'anointing') – a distinction that appealed to many charismatics" (Tomlinson, 1997, p. 30). Also influential was the emergence of figurehead personalities who were called apostles and who became seen by adherents as authorities appointed by God. Discipleship and spiritual authority were themes that caught on in many developing new house churches.

## **7.2. Restorationist Discipling And Pastoral Care**

Walker continued to explain that the discipling doctrines which were actually put in place by Restorationist leaders did alter the usual formal ordering of pastoral care. They created a patriarchal network of structured relationships voluntarily entered into by the members (Walker, 1998, p. 182). This patriarchal hierarchy was understood by them to be God's order in this setting. Discipling and shepherding which was the lifestyle operated within Restorationism involved submission to overseers and spiritual counsellors. The hierarchical theocracy (God first, then men, followed by women and children) practiced in Restorationist churches assumed that the shepherds were more mature than the sheep, so parents had authority over children, wives did not discipline husbands, and elders did not order prophets. There was a gaping hole in this structure – no allowance for single women who have no husband to 'cover' them. This could leave such women very vulnerable and easily perceived as a threat to insecure leaders. All the levels in the hierarchy were seen to have the delegated authority of God Himself. But as Walker pointed out, two dimensions were added. The formal ecclesiastical authority of apostles was transformed into an informal system of paternal relationships; it did not undermine formal authority but reinforced it. Also it had the effect of extending the influence of leaders into every corner of culture in their community. Boundaries between church and home lives were blurred. When individuals joined this movement, they left the world for a sacred society (Walker, 1998, p. 183). House groups acted as an extended family; members were encouraged to congregate and live in the same streets and share a common community life. In the Restorationist charismatic evangelical setting,

'counselling' ranged between formal confrontation and proactive intervention. This could involve giving advice, offering methods and means for overcoming perceived problems which could include how an individual could improve their prayer life, tithing graciously, being active in church and coping with non-Christian relationships (Walker, 1998, p. 185). In different settings these matters would not warrant attention or been seen as problems or issues at all. This paternalistic type structure led to dependency rather than the maturity where individuals assume personal responsibility for their own lives (Walker 1998, p. 185). Where there are insecure, authoritarian personalities involved as leaders, the greater the potential for discipling abuses and the more insecure the leader, the more the authority of their assumed divine appointment could be called upon. By contrast, discipling outside of Restorationism usually involved a less submissive concept. Guidance and information would be offered regarding living the Christian life and those using the pastoral structure retained personal autonomy and responsibility for their own decision making.

Questioning or disputing pronouncements from leaders could have serious consequences for individuals in Restorationism. Dave Tomlinson told of one professional married woman who "spoke her mind to the church leaders". The husband was told by his shepherd that if he could not bring his wife into 'proper submission' any advancement up the leadership scale, which they said they held in prospect for him, would not happen. As he tried to do as his shepherd had said, marital dispute ensued, the wife being told by the leaders that she was rebellious, possessed of the 'spirit of Jezebel' and living in disobedience to scripture (Tomlinson, 1997, p. 35). One of the implications of questioning the

leadership was that, because leaders deemed themselves to be divinely appointed, to question them was equivalent to questioning God Himself, and this was seen as unacceptable to these leaders.

Distinct groups were formed to practice their Christian lives as they believed God wanted them to; Restorationism and the charismatic evangelical subculture are prime identifiable examples of this phenomenon. There has also been the development of a significant subculture where specifically Wimber Vineyard Christians keep themselves apart whilst mirroring the way the world operates (Ward, 2003). This subculture includes everything from style of church services and worship, prayer ministry, literature and training schemes to merchandising, festivals and celebrities. There are publishers, recording companies and music publishers as music and worship materials are in high demand, para church organisations and in-house magazines. More recently websites and social networking have become significant means of communication in the subculture. Most services that are needed by Wimber Vineyard Christians are provided 'in house' as is evidenced by the multiple Christian shopping websites, including Vineyard Records UK.

The themes that can be identified in the progression from conservative evangelicalism to charismatic evangelicalism, in varying intensities are belief in the basics of Christianity as stated in the four characteristic 'deposits' of evangelicalism previously outlined, belief in how church should be expressed, authority structures, the appointment of leaders, and how scripture is used in these structures as the authoritative reference point for all. There is also the

perception, again to varying degrees of the battle between the spiritual forces of good and evil, or God and Satan. "People engaged in power evangelism are members of God's army, sent to do battle against the forces of the kingdom of darkness. They *expect* conflict, because they are always looking to overcome the works of Satan in order to set people free" (J Wimber and Springer, 1990, p. 181). This teaching is where Christians either interpret almost anything that goes wrong in life as an attack of the enemy or in terms of spiritual warfare where God's kingdom is set to overpower the challenge and control of Satan. Wagner has extended this thinking to include what he has called 'geographical territorial evil spirits', which he said were in control of specific defined areas (C.P. Wagner, 1991). Territorial spirits are powerful fallen angels who exercise influence over cities, regions and even nations, effecting every aspect of a culture (J Wimber and Springer, 1990).

## **8. Conclusion**

Because there was significant movement across the boundaries of the different groupings in charismatic evangelicalism, there was considerable influence between one group and another. However, cues were taken from the pastoral practices in the Restorationist house churches by other charismatic evangelical groups and certainly counselling and pastoral care in these groups was influenced by resistance to the shepherding that was being practised in the Restorationist movement. That is, that it was appreciated by non Restorationist churches that individuals should remain autonomous, taking personal responsibility for their own lives and making their own decisions, perhaps with the

help and appropriate intervention of counselling skills from an empathic, trained listener or pastoral worker.

As part of the progression and development of practices in pastoral care, it can be seen that there have been many influences affecting how things are done in that regard in different churches. In the mainstream denominational churches, pastoral care is a more formalised part of professional church leadership, pastoral counselling gaining a place of its own there. People left their churches because they perceived a lack of room for the activity and work of the Holy Spirit in search for places where there was more freedom for the Holy Spirit to move and work. The way individuals problems were taken care of also allowed for the work of the Spirit, prayer ministry being the first line of approach, regardless of whether there were problem issues present. Individuals were encouraged to receive blessing from God in prayer ministry often.

I wonder to what extent is it possible that the structures and practices which have evolved still allow for possible power imbalances and there abuses between leaders, prayer ministers and those who are responders? Reardon (1997) discussed the criteria by which religious abuse might be judged. He examined authority and the necessity for external authority to maintain order. Also, that the most effective transforming authority is that which affects internalised obedience, a general point made by Foucault in his model of disciplinary power where people are effectively controlled through their own self-monitoring processes (Foucault, 1979). Surveillance for them becomes internalised and self-monitoring results. There was an assumption that people are largely unaware that they are

controlled this way. So even if the Christian leadership cannot observe individuals all the time, there is an implication that God of course can, and not just observe physical comings and goings but also know the innermost thoughts of every individual! Sometimes the abuses involved in crossing lines are subtle as responders believe that their best interests are held at heart, but the needs of leaders for validation and esteem are being met at the same time. The more obvious abuses are of course easier to spot, though not necessarily easier to resolve.

## CHAPTER 3

### WIMBER: THE MAN AND HIS THEOLOGY

#### Introduction

I have in the previous chapter described and evaluated the background of the more recent years of evangelicalism and shown how the church in general perceived itself to have stagnated and be experiencing decline in attendance and growth. Percy, exploring charisma in connection with Wimber asked what it was that made people follow a potential leader like Wimber. Percy suggested that not only would their message be charismatic, but also revolutionary, by which he meant that it would represent “an alleviant from the present stress or climate” (Percy, 1996b, p. 53). Charismatic leaders would offer a means of rescue, in this case for the church which perceived itself to be in crisis because of the decline in numerical growth, its apparent powerlessness and seeming inability to feel close enough to God to affect any change (Percy, 1996b).

Tomlinson said in relation to leadership styles and situations, "According to Max Weber (Weber, 1964) the charismatic movement is a phenomenon that occurs where an established institutional order either breaks down and becomes disorganised or simply runs out of steam and loses the ability to satisfy or represent people. The kind of leadership that then emerges will be based on personal charisma (theological or otherwise, or both) and upon a recognition of the exceptional or even supernatural qualities of an individual charismatic leader"

(Tomlinson, 1997, p. 29). He continued that this type of charismatic authority has no mechanism for appointment or dismissal, no career structure and requires no training or qualifications. This is by and large exactly what emerged and exists today in the charismatic evangelical movement and so in Wimber Vineyard and New Wine settings. Whilst some benefits are brought, there can be a profound lack of awareness of the dangers that may also exist. The lack of formal external training can result in leaders not learning from the vast experience of others of running churches and relating to their congregations or the art and discipline of resourcing themselves. They would tend to rely on inspiration from the Holy Spirit (Tomlinson, 1997).

This chapter looks at the life and theology of the Vineyard's founder and leader, John Wimber. I suggest that, because of his lack of any kind of Christian heritage he could have been vulnerable to being influenced by the ideas of those he met through his rapid progression on his Christian journey. This may have resulted in him not having sufficient criteria and knowledge with which to evaluate what he heard and experienced. Wimber stated that he was not even aware of ever having met a Christian before his conversion (J Wimber, 1985d, p. 147). His life was in the music industry which encompassed with it the attendant smoking, alcohol and drug misuse that more often than not went along with that lifestyle. His marriage was on the rocks. He was converted to Christianity and his life took a completely different turn. During this process this warm, affable, capable and well intentioned man came across a range of people by whom, as he himself admitted, he was significantly influenced. He described himself as constantly seeking information. Over a relatively short period of time he came to lead

churches and developed a different theology of church life and lifestyle. This chapter argues the possibility that his lack of Christian heritage, his enthusiasm, and maybe gullible personality may have made it difficult for him to make complete sense of all that he heard from those whose ways of thinking and practicing he did not know how to process or incorporate into his ever increasing pool of knowledge. The possibility is that the influence of some of those who Wimber met and spent time with may not always have been helpful. New ways of Christian practice were being explored and those times were exciting because different ways for all people to experience God were being sought. His lack of background experience may have made it difficult for him to discern the true presence of God in everything that happened.

Exploring Wimber's background may shed some light on how he came to the understanding he did and may also help to identify the impact of the influences he came under and the variety of paths that he travelled. I have drawn on the primary sources of the story as told by both Wimber himself in both *Power Healing* (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 48) and *Power Evangelism* (J Wimber and Springer, 1992) and Carol Wimber, John's wife (C Wimber, 1987, 1999, March 30, 2010). The story has been retold and supplemented by others (Albrecht, 1999, Hilborn, 2006, Hunt, 1997, Jackson, 1999) who each inevitably tell different versions mostly to illustrate points they are making. I shall probably do the same.

## 1. John Wimber

Wimber was converted to Christianity in 1962 aged 29. He described himself as a fourth generation unbeliever (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 7). At the time, he was a personally desperate jazz/rock musician and record producer, having founded and managed the band, The Righteous Brothers. His marriage was failing, he and Carol, his wife were separated and looking into divorce Las Vegas style (that is quick and easy). They had three children. He had no religious or Christian heritage. Wimber told of how, feeling desperate he went out into the Nevada desert crying to the heavens for help. On returning to his hotel room there was a message from Carol asking him to call her. She wanted to give their marriage another chance. He connected her message to his cries in the desert. "Smugly, I thought, "I'm in touch with the supernatural!" (J Wimber and Springer, 1990, p. 18). Up to this point, Wimber's knowledge of anything remotely spiritual was only from his Nevada desert experience and without further knowledge, by his own admission he "would be left groping around in the dark and seeking after 'spiritual experiences'" (J Wimber and Springer, 1990, p. 22). Wimber made this comment regarding seeking after spiritual experiences before the time of his conversion. It is of interest that 'spiritual experiences' were part of his thinking before his conversion and remained so subsequently. Carol did however have some family church affiliation as they were Roman Catholic (Hilborn, 2006, J Wimber and Springer, 1990). The Wimbbers became committed to working on their marriage and also finding out more about God. Because of Carol's background, they started their journey in the Roman Catholic Church and took instruction there. Carol became pregnant with their fourth child; they renewed

their wedding vows and continued with the church. Wimber however, was not happy as the priest found his continued questioning too hard to handle resulting in their relationship with that church ending. Then, through friends and a connection with a Quaker church pastor, Gunner Payne they were converted to Christianity through the evangelistic work of Gunner in Yorba Linda, California. They subsequently joined the Quaker church and plunged themselves into personal evangelism. Many were converted through them (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 83). Wimber's approach to evangelism was to rely "more on my intuition, a spiritual guidance system that told me when people were ready to give their lives to Christ" (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 8). Again Wimber was mentioning his reliance on his spirituality. By 1970, Wimber was co pastoring the Quaker church whilst attending Azusa Pacific College where he studied for a Biblical Studies degree. Although the church grew, Wimber became disillusioned and dissatisfied (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 45). In 1975, five years later, he moved to Pasadena where he enrolled on a church growth course at Fuller Theological Seminary taught by C. Peter Wagner. He was later asked by Wagner to take a position as founding director of the department of Church Growth at Fuller just thirteen years after his conversion. Wimber's rise might well be described as meteoric. Having founded the church growth department at Fuller, Wimber and Wagner travelled extensively all over the USA as church growth consultants to hundreds of churches who said they wanted to grow, none of them Pentecostal or charismatic. For someone who had absolutely no prior knowledge or background of Christianity – there was a lot to understand for which Wimber would have had little foundation to build on which would have helped keep everything making sense. Inevitably also, someone on a steep learning

curve would have needed to adjust and readjust their understanding of the huge amounts of information they would be taking in (and giving out – Wimber became an acknowledged church growth expert). It was during the times he spent at Fuller that he met the men who were to be very influential in his thinking and life, including and particularly C. Peter Wagner, Charles Kraft, Donald McGavren and George Eldon Ladd (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 48). Wimber had been a cessationist (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 43, 1992, P. 11) but Wagner's work led him to explore spiritual gifts (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 11). "Wimber was a college graduate and also worked as head of an entire department focusing on church growth at Fuller Seminary, so he was very comfortable working in academic circles, though he was not himself a scholar" (Zichterman, 2011, p. 220). Wimber, through his life had owned and operated fifty-two businesses. "This business acumen served him well when he became a church growth consultant because it was a small stretch for him to apply his understanding of people and American culture to the growth and decline of congregations" (Miller, 2005, p. 144).

Wagner, also a church growth expert had noted how churches where the supernatural occurred were also growing significantly numerically (C.P. Wagner, 1998, p. 14) and so drew the conclusion that effective evangelism depended as much on demonstration as declaration. Wimber said "I was especially impressed by the relationship between charismatic gifts like healing and church growth in third world countries...This influence came at a key time, when I was open to re-examining many of my beliefs about the Holy Spirit (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 48).

During 1977, Wimber's wife experienced an encounter with the Holy Spirit but at the same time, Wimber was going through a personal crisis and had yet to experience any spiritual encounters. Wimber was away on a trip and his personal issues particularly relating to his poor health and busy lifestyle (he was travelling and lecturing as a church growth consultant all over the USA) came to a head. He was becoming very disillusioned with the established church and Stafford reports that Wimber said, "There was a lot of action that was called the work of the Holy Spirit, but it was nothing more than human effort in which the Holy Spirit was asked to tag along. I felt it turned the stomach of God. It certainly did mine and it wore me out" (Stafford, 1986, p. 19). Stafford also said that Wagner claimed that he was totally unaware of Wimber's growing disillusionment with the church (p. 19). In *Power Healing* (1986) Wimber explained further how he cried out to God, describing how he was eating himself into the grave, his blood pressure was too high and his head throbbed constantly. He was worn out from long hours lecturing. He said, "God, here I am feeling as though I am going to die soon...I've tried so hard to lose weight, vowing many times I would control my eating. Many times I've tried to straighten myself out, and there's been no change" (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 51). While Wimber remained working at Fuller, Carol was hosting prayer groups at the Friends church. It was at this time that Wimber felt called to minister to these groups, "having grown rather discouraged by what he was observing in many mainline churches across the country" (Miller, 2005, p. 148). He began to pastor the group and soon resigned his position at Fuller, to be the leader of the church which separated from the Friends church and became the first Vineyard Christian Fellowship. Although

Wimber was converted into and served as pastor in the Friends church, he was not able to merge himself into traditional church life or continue to serve the wider church. He became focussed on his own domain, using his skills in leadership and growing organisations to establish his own new church group. Miller said that the real genius of Wimber may have been that he had operated many businesses “before the Lord got hold of him. He understood markets and models and only had to add the message to his repertoire” (p. 160). When this opportunity came to start his own church, it had it’s own contemporary sound, “the music drew on the same idiom as the unconverted ... but the lyrics were different ... In short there was a new openness to transcendent realities that resonated with Wimber’s Quaker mysticism” (p. 145). “Wimber was a jazz musician. He knew how to improvise and he knew how to read an audience ... he knew how to communicate with non-Christians, and it was in their language – the language of music and understated rhetoric – that he preached the gospel” (Miller, 2005, p. 159-160). Williams said that Wimber established a church planting movement focused on worship and compassion and today, Vineyard lives out those values (Williams, 2005, p. 168). At the time of writing (2012) there are 56 established churches and 43 church plants (VineyardChurches, 2012) in the UK. Having said that, Wimber reports that a frustrating time of learning about and trying to pray for the sick, largely unsuccessfully ensued (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, pp. 63-70).

During this time Wimber related inviting a ‘young man’ to preach at the church. This was not someone who Wimber had met at Fuller, but at one of the churches

(Calvary Chapel) where he had previously been connected. The events surrounding this visit are fairly consistently recounted by both John and Carol Wimber (C Wimber, 1987, J Wimber and Springer, 1992), however, the impressions created in the written accounts do differ in emphasis from an account given at the 1985 Signs and Wonders Conference by Wimber (J. Wimber, 1985e). I have noted the differences in the following account. One significant difference is that in *Power Evangelism* and *A Hunger for God*, the 'young man' is not named, however as Wimber verbally described this event as portrayed on YouTube video clips (J. Wimber, 1985e) he named him early in the account as Lonnie Frisbee.

## **2. Lonnie Frisbee**

In the verbal account Wimber related that he had heard that Lonnie could be a bit strange, but that he felt that God had told him to make the invitation to him to preach which he did that same day (Mother's Day). Wimber said "you think you'd be safe in church on Mother's Day wouldn't you? (J. Wimber, 1985e). He went on to describe his anxiety about what might happen when Lonnie preached and how he put off the preach time for as long as he could. When the time finally came however, it started well and then Wimber said, "he does the weirdest thing I've ever heard of." (J. Wimber, 1985e).

The written narratives related that the 'young man' started to preach; he said that the Holy Spirit had been grieved by the church, so he was going to invite him to come and minister. He called all the young people under 25 to come forward and

then said “Come Holy Spirit” “And he did!” (C Wimber, 1987, J Wimber and Springer, 1992). Wimber’s verbal account is a little more dramatic. He related that Lonnie said, “Well that’s it. The church has been offending the Holy Spirit for a long time, He’s quenched, but He’s getting over it. And we’re going to invite him to come and minister now. Come Holy Spirit.” Wimber then said, “and then *whamo!*” Wimber signalled with his arm sweeping across his body how Lonnie’s arms swept across the congregation.

Wimber continued, “The Spirit of God comes and people start falling. They are falling and bouncing and speaking in tongues like turkeys, ‘gobble, gobble, gobble’” (my best phonetic representation of what Wimber said) “and a microphone falls down with one of the young people, and he is ‘gobbling’ into the microphone. We’re not talking about a few minutes, we’re talking about 45 minutes he was speaking in tongues into the microphone. We were wading over bodies, we couldn’t get the microphone off him, and Lonnie was going like a banshee. You know he’s running through the crowd, waving his hands, and I’m thinking, he is pushing people over, but he’s not touching them. He’s passing by and they’re going whamo, whamo, and falling, and I am saying to myself, O God, O God, O God get me out of here, and people are grabbing their Bibles also and marching off saying not me, not me and some I have never seen since that day and that was four years ago they went out the door. And then, when it finally stopped, I got it (in the neck)” (J. Wimber, 1985e).

The written accounts continue, describing the result of the ‘young man’s’ ‘Come Holy Spirit’ invitation at Wimber’s church which he depicted as looking like a battlefield with bodies everywhere, people weeping and shaking, speaking in tongues – none of which were familiar occurrences to the members at that time (J Wimber and Springer, 1992). Wimber said, “I was aghast!” (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 62). In the aftermath the people remaining left the church building, there was much upset and Wimber spent the night looking for the term ‘Come Holy Spirit’ in scripture, in vain. The verbal account added that Wimber was looking for “Come Holy Spirit, come, whamo, whamo, gobble, gobble”. His

search was still in vain. However, as the written account relates, having been assured via a telephone call from a friend that this was God, Wimber moved cautiously forward and the church took on new life. The verbal account of the telephone call puts a different perspective on what happened. Wimber said,

“God, if this is you I have got to have some sense, is this you or not? Then the phone rang, it’s my friend Tommy from Denver, he didn’t call all that often. He asks what’s going on, what’s happening and I tell him about Lonnie. Tommy says, O yes, I know about Lonnie; whamo yeah? He had had similar experiences basically and Tommy says it’s the Lord. He says yes, that’s the same sort of thing that happened to us back with Jesus revival movement. The same kind of power, the same kind of manifestation. It’s the Lord. So I felt a great deal of reassurance. God had given me a witness, a credible witness, someone who had been there and seen this kind of thing before, from the inside out. I’d only heard about it. I’ve lived here in the community, but I wasn’t aware of the totality of the Jesus People movement till later. Supernatural phenomena continued and four months later seven hundred people had been converted” (J. Wimber, 1985e).

It is of interest to me that Wimber accepted that just because Tommy had had similar experiences with Lonnie, this was enough reassurance for him that God was the author of the occurrences. Surely a repeat performance does not of itself mean that God had in fact inspired these events and more awareness and discernment would be appropriate in order to gain such assurances. I certainly do not know whether God had something or anything to do with these events, but I am suggesting that more a thorough assessment might have been made as so much sprang from these events which affected the lives of many.

In *Power Evangelism*, Wimber said “I was an expert on Church growth but I had never seen evangelism like that” (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 64). It was

certainly a catalytic turning point and the growth of Vineyard is history. Whether this was achieved through traditional evangelistic preaching the gospel strategies or whether the growth came about largely because of the occurrences is not stated by Wimber. But he did go on to say that healing was a Gospel advancer, it aids evangelism. That is, once someone had been healed or had an experience of the Holy Spirit, they are more open to hearing the Gospel. Wimber said he learned from the Third World students at Fuller that it was easier to pray for people's healing than to tell them about Christ, and that it was especially easy to tell people about Christ after they had been healed. (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 60). Wimber went on to suggest that this was verified in scripture as Christ healed the sick and then proclaimed the Gospel. Benn and Burkill say however, that "Jesus performed spectacular miracles in front of thousands of people – but how many disciples did he have at the end of his earthly ministry? About 120. Miracles do not in themselves produce faith" (Benn and Burkill, 1987, p. 3).

It is also of interest to explore the life of Lonnie Frisbee, as subsequently, Wimber and Frisbee travelled the world together preaching and performing healings and miracles. Frisbee was integral in the development of Wimber's signs and wonders thinking and theology. Frisbee was a charismatic key figure in the Jesus Movement, and described himself in the 1970s as "seeing prophet and mystic" (Di Sabatino, 2006b). He had been welcomed into Calvary Chapel in its early days when Chuck Smith – the pastor was taken with his charisma. He had a hippie like appearance, looking like a traditional image of how Jesus might be portrayed. Sometimes known as a 'Jesus Freak', Frisbee, because of his

charisma, speaking ability and appearance was often a featured guest on media shows including the Kathryn Kuhlman, *I Believe in Miracles* show (Di Sabatino, 2006a). His flamboyant and theatrical style became part of Wimber's style.

Frisbee's style (throwing his arms and sweeping across the congregation resulting in many of them being knocked off their feet to the floor) was a style he learned from Kathryn Kuhlman who also had an extraordinary theatrical and eccentric style of ministry in her *I Believe in Miracles* Crusades.

Lonnie Frisbee had significant personal problems and connections that were more mystic and faith healing than directly Christian. As reported by Coker and in Di Sabatino's film about Frisbee, he came from a broken home. His teenage years were spent living in the gay underground scene on a beach, taking LSD and other illegal drugs and experimenting with every available experience including hypnotism, mysticism, and the occult. He was a practising homosexual, and had been married and divorced. His marriage was one of convenience, there being no intimacy between his wife, Connie and him (Coker, 2005). It did not appear that he could always control his behaviour - it being said that his homosexuality was an open secret in the church community, he would 'party' on Saturday night and then preach on Sunday morning (Di Sabatino, 2006b). The obvious double standards of Frisbee raise significant issues. Were the churches where he preached prepared to ignore or make allowances for his behaviour in return for the charisma and experiences that he brought with him? Frisbee was eventually obliged to leave the church and Wimber severed his relationship with him on the exposure of a homosexual affair, which Frisbee admitted. He said in interviews that at no time did he ever justify homosexuality. He always

maintained it was a sin, but it was a constant issue for him (Di Sabatino, 2006a). He contracted Aids and died of the complications in 1993, aged 43. “Despite the stories of spiritual prowess that surround his life, his enduring personal struggles overwhelmed him. And even though he was the charismatic sparkplug said to have ignited the rise of two worldwide denominations (Calvary Chapel & Vineyard), his name has all but been removed from their histories” (Di Sabatino, 2006a). So the books written by both John and Carol Wimber were a sanitised version of this part of the story and by writing in this way, they chose to avoid the issues regarding the influence Frisbee would have had on Wimber or why Wimber chose to spend so much time with him, ministering with him all over the world.

There were a number of people by whom Wimber was influenced as he was on his own Christian journey. I have chosen to look at the lives of a further three whom Wimber did meet at Fuller Seminary, both whilst he was a student and later on the faculty. C. Peter Wagner taught the church growth course Wimber had initially enrolled on, and later George Eldon Ladd and Charles Kraft, all of whom Wimber drew upon to shape his thinking and philosophy of power evangelism and power healing. There were also wider influences whom Wimber mentioned, people with healing ministries and at the centre of revivals and so on from history. I will show for example how the distinctive influences of these men in particular show up in Wimber’s writing and teaching and also question how the nature of these influences may have arisen in the lives of the men. I would also suggest that because these men held the thoughts and beliefs they did and they were respected that it is as though permission to think and believe ‘outside the

box' is granted and approved. I am not suggesting that it is bad to have independent thought, but where boundaries and discipline are perhaps not close enough, difficulty can arise.

C. Peter Wagner and Charles Kraft both had backgrounds in developing nations in South America and Africa where more primitive religions were the norm for those people groups. They brought their experiences from those very different settings into more developed nations without making any reference to the cultural differences that would affect how the gospel was presented. They more than suggested that the circumstances are without question transferable and the impact would be the same, church growth.

### **3. C. Peter Wagner (1930 – present)**

C. Peter Wagner and his wife were missionaries in Bolivia for fifteen years before Wagner became professor of Church Growth at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1971. In 1982 he and Wimber co-instructed the famous MC 510 course there – Signs, Wonders and Church Growth. They practiced signs and wonders and held 'clinics' with the students at the increasingly popular course. Wagner had a creative way of working and is known as a pioneer in the spiritual warfare world (C.P. Wagner, 1983a, p. 131-132). At the time the course was running, he was involved with the concepts of spiritual mapping<sup>14</sup> and territorial spirits where named demons are said to control geographical areas, and creating strategies for

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<sup>14</sup> Spiritual mapping and territorial spirits are contained within the concepts of spiritual warfare and involve identifying satanic and demonic forces in an area whether they be located in persons, places or objects and driving them away by prayer, prayer marching, worship, so that that place may be 'taken for God'. So far, this writer is unaware of any claim being made that a town or city has been taken for God.

promoting strategic and effective prayer (C.P. Wagner, 1996). In the introduction to his book, *The New Apostolic Churches* (1998), Wagner described the 'seasons' of his research, firstly the technical details of church growth, then in collaboration with Wimber, the spiritual principles of church growth which focussed on the relationship between supernatural signs and wonders and church growth and then on prayer and spiritual warfare.

The first thing I note is that Wagner's experience of evangelism and church growth came from what Wimber called "non technological countries where the people are often animists. That is they believe there are actual spirits that hold people in bondage..." (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 81). He also cited Paul Yonggi Cho's Church, Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea and the experience of Nigerian tribes-people where rather than Bible study, the people said they really needed help dealing with the spirits that plagued the villagers every night, to support the use of spiritual gifts, signs and wonders in evangelism in 'technological' countries. Wimber was attempting to transpose a method of affecting church growth in places where more traditional missionaries have been at work onto places where the needs are different. For example, the problem is not that of being haunted by spirits every night, but there are multiple issues of many kinds that western society contends with. He also suggested that church attendance was on the rise in England at the time and that power evangelism was what was making the difference. As I have shown, during the early 1980s, there was an upsurge of evangelistic projects because of the anxiety regarding decline in church growth – so although Wimber tried to imply a link (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 81), there was no way that any increase can solely be

attributed to power evangelism. Even though power evangelism had been introduced into the country, it was not being practised to any significant degree as the people involved were largely still engaged in praying amongst themselves.

Wagner has founded and is president of several organisations, a more recent one being the New Apostolic Movement. This movement promotes prophets and apostles who alone, he said have the power and authority to execute God's plans and purposes on earth. Members of this movement believe they are laying the foundation for a global church which will be governed by them (**Global Harvest Ministries**). Another organisation founded by Wagner is the Wagner Leadership Institute which promises students the "highest level of training and spiritual impartation through a successful faculty of internationally known leaders who walk and minister powerfully out of the five-fold ascension gifts" (WagnerLeadershipInstitute, 2009). Five-fold ascension gifts – another original from Wagner. He coined the term Third Wave which describes different moves of the Holy Spirit through history, the third wave being what Vineyard are involved in. He was also involved in the prayer marching movement (C.P. Wagner, 1991). The biblical basis for all this is at best questionable. Wagner is very adept at justifying his position and thinking, making it very difficult to see where there may be difficulties or errors. His blog dated April 22, 2010 is about extra-biblical revelation and how, because there is no mention in the Bible of things like Sunday schools, church buildings, celebrating Christmas and Easter and the abolition of slavery, which are all things that many Christians either do or believe means that other things that are not directly mentioned in the Bible are allowable as long as they are not anti-biblical (C.P. Wagner, 2010). He was giving himself

a lot of room for manoeuvre with this way of thinking. Of course it is to be expected that he would state that his beliefs are biblical, but the range of these so called biblically based beliefs/statements and strategies is so wide, it is difficult to see how it all fits together.

Doris Wagner, Wagner's wife in her book *How to Cast Out Demons* (D Wagner, 2000), gave some detail from her perspective. During their time as missionaries in Bolivia "Peter had been either a student or a teacher most of his life." It was while he was studying missiology in the late 1960s that "things finally fell into place and the term 'power encounter' became part of our vocabulary. Peter and I have always had the somewhat dubious reputation of being about ten years ahead of the pack as far as comfort zone is concerned. If we feel it's God's will, new ground is never a threat to us...but we just had to know more about this 'power stuff' (D Wagner, 2000, p. 8). Peter was at Fuller by this time – Church growth being his speciality and Wimber came to take a course as a Quaker pastor. He learned about healing and she claimed hundreds and thousands were healed. She said that in the class on praying for the sick "many were healed and we were having the time of our lives" (D Wagner, 2000, p. 9). It can be seen here that how this group of people who integrate together over time, pick up phrases from each other, and incorporate them into their own thinking, we can see here 'power/stuff' and 'power encounter'.

In *Power Evangelism*, Wimber mentions Wagner and his work on numerous occasions. They met at Fuller (p. 10) when Wimber was also introduced to Wagner's work. Wagner is a prolific writer and Wimber stated that he was

influenced by his work on personal evangelism where he said that many western Christians when engaging in evangelism stop at the point of making a decision to follow Christ rather than the continued work of making disciples. This led Wimber to suspect that the intellectual aspects of the Gospel are often prioritised which resulted in more intellectual assent rather than faith itself. Wimber acknowledged some confusion until reading Wagner's *Look Out! The Pentecostals are Coming* (C.P. Wagner, 1973). He said, "in Dr Wagner, I encountered a credible witness, an accomplished missionary ... who wrote that healing and deliverance were happening in South America and that "these miraculous encounters resulted in large evangelistic harvests and church growth" (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 11). There are other occasions where Wager is mentioned in this context plus another instance where Wimber stated that it was his wife, Carol and Wagner who persuaded him to leave Fuller and return to the pastorate (yet Wagner had invited Wimber to become the director of the department of Church Growth at Fuller). Clearly there was a strong relationship between the two men. I wonder how much Wagner's fertile thinking was helpful to Wimber. It does appear from the way Wimber wrote that he was looking for stimulation and support and his own leanings towards the supernatural and spirituality created enough common ground for these two men to feed each other's thinking and ideas and affirm each other in the process.

Wimber was, by his own admission influenced by numerous people, some close to him and others from afar or from history. When it came to writing about the theological framework into which his evolving thinking might fit, he drew quite heavily on George Eldon Ladd, whose main work concerned the Kingdom of God.

#### **4. George Eldon Ladd (1911-1982)**

Firstly, Ladd was on the staff at Fuller Theological Seminary at the same time as Wimber. Ladd wrote the original work Wimber drew on, in the 1960s – it was first published under the title *Jesus and the Kingdom: The Eschatology of Biblical Reason* (1964). He and his writing were a product of those times. The empirical style that is used today was not employed by him and he made statements in a forthright manner, for example, in discussing the nature of evil he said, “Evil is implicitly recognized to have societal character. This age, as long as it lasts, will be characterized by wars, international conflict, even family strife. Organized society reflects an evil character” (George Eldon Ladd, 1974, ch. 14). However it may be of interest to reflect on the global situation at the time in an attempt to account for and contextualise what and how he wrote. The issue of communism was prominent and Christians fervently prayed for its downfall and an end to the oppression and persecution of Christians in communist countries. This situation which western society in general was very concerned about – not just Christians, nevertheless painted an all too real representation of the spiritual warfare he spoke of. D’Elia, Ladd’s biographer depicted him as a man who, at the expense of his marriage and family, pursued an academic career focussed on creating a work of scholarship from an evangelical perspective that would gain him recognition in non evangelical circles and a place at the broad academic table (D’Elia, 2008). This work was originally published in 1964 and did gain a favourable hearing by many. However, there was one harsh critic, Norman Perrin, a prominent figure in academia who “trashed the book” (Harmon, 2010). Crushed and considering himself to be a failure from that time, Ladd fell into

depression and alcoholism from which he never recovered. His family relationships were under severe strain (D'Elia, 2008, p. xx). We can note that the way Ladd characterised evil on earth was by wars, international conflict, and family strife, things that would certainly have been critical personal concerns for him at the time. In his biography he is described as a person whose life and work were filled with intriguing tensions and contrasts and a person who was spiritual and ambitious, intelligent and insecure, bold and troubled at the same time. Had he lived longer than his 71 years he would have seen the second generation of his students and academics who did gain recognition at the broader academic table (Harmon, 2010). He would also have seen how the influence of his work played out in Wimbers subsequent ministry.

Ladd, in his work had done a lot of the hard labour figuring out detail concerning the Kingdom of God. To offer a formal critique of this work is beyond the remit of this thesis. It is clear that his work was innovative but apart from being the basis of Wimber's theology of the Kingdom of God, it gained only limited acceptance. This did not deter Wimber who saw that he could use Ladd's eschatological emphasis to support and inform his own burgeoning signs and wonders theology. Wimber was looking at a gospel that healed and restored individuals yet he drew on the work of someone who was unable to find that for himself. "Although he [Ladd] wrote extensively of the presence of the kingdom, he struggled to taste its fruits in his own life" (D'Elia, 2008, back cover, review by Marianne Meye Thompson). The same could be said of Wimber whose ill health and overweight constantly plagued him (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 51). Wimber was diagnosed with cancer in 1993, he had a stroke in 1995 and coronary artery

bypass surgery in 1997. As he was recovering from this surgery at home, he had a fall in his home, hit his head and died in hospital the next day from a massive cerebral haemorrhage (Hayes and Dart, 1997, **John Wimber Timeline**, Maxwell et al., 1998).

## **5. Charles Kraft (1932 – present)**

In exploring a little further those who Wimber chose to draw on, we come to Charles Kraft who is professor of Anthropology and Intercultural Communication at Fuller Seminary. Wimber drew on Kraft in *Power Evangelism* concerning worldviews. As will be seen in the following sections, worldviews were pivotal to how Wimber formulated his theology. Explaining how western deductive reasoning and logic excluded the more Asian influence of animism, Wimber quoted Kraft who said that a worldview may be defined as “the culturally structured assumptions, values and commitments underlying a people’s perception of REALITY [Kraft defines REALITY in caps as what is actually there (as God sees it); reality, with small ‘r’ is how human beings understand things.] Worldview is the major influence on how we perceive REALITY” (Kraft, 1989, p. 20). Wimber explained from Kraft that worldviews provide an explanation of how and why things are done as they are and give the culture a subconscious legitimacy in the minds of the people. A worldview also is the basis for judging and validating experience, for example, what is good and what is bad or acceptable and unacceptable in society. In addition worldviews provide psychological reinforcement for a way of life, how ‘we’ do things and ‘they’ do them differently. Lastly Kraft suggested that worldviews provide integrating and

adapting functions for new information and experiences. Some new ideas are integrated into a society and there is resistance to others. Wimber believed that “some characteristics of western worldviews have a damaging effect on Christians’ faith ... secularism undermines our belief in the ability of God to intervene in the physical universe” (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 136). So one impact of this for Wimber is that Christians can find it very difficult to accept a spiritual cause or healing of disease.

We will see next the profound influence this thinking had on how Wimber developed his theology and practice. It had an impact on further reinforcing his spiritual warfare thinking and gave additional foundation to his philosophy of healing and the way he formulated his training programme for praying for the sick.

## **6. The Development Of Wimber’s Theology**

### **6.1. How Does Wimber Vineyard Ministry Operate?**

Exploring how Wimber Vineyard prayer ministry operates will help to expose the thinking which lies behind the operation. Wimber Vineyard ministry is dependent on a theology contained in what Wimber called a worldview. Of course all cultures, people groups, nationalities and so on have their own way of seeing things, a worldview that works for them and makes sense of life for them.

Wimber suggested that the reason preventing many Christians from experiencing signs and wonders and power evangelism was because of the secular worldviews and traditional religious Christian views held, probably unknowingly by

many, where supernatural occurrences are not anticipated or embraced (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, 1992).

One of the major themes discussed by Wimber was that of the worldview that was required in order to see 'signs and wonders' and power evangelism. This was distinctly different from the science or western dominated view or dominant discourses mostly taken for granted in the developed world (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 186). Wimber further suggested that in order to access the lifestyle of Vineyard, participants needed to change their worldview from the science dominated discourses which, he said prevented individuals experiencing everything available to them in terms of signs and wonders, to the worldview which he outlined. He explained in both *Power Evangelism* (1992) and *Power Healing* (1986) that Christians who may think that their worldview allowed them to accept the possibility of supernatural phenomena did not appreciate the subtlety of the effects of secularism (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 29). He maintained that unless there was a radical change from the western secular worldview, at best, Christians were *inclined* to question modern reports of the supernatural.

This is a deeply important concept that Wimber put forward. Those familiar with Wimber and Vineyard will be aware of his talk of worldviews, and the implication of stating that in order to participate in and see signs and wonders, a significant change in the way an individual accounted for things must be embraced or the concepts just would not work, was profound. Individuals were being told they needed to abandon most, if not all, of the ideas on which they had (knowingly or unknowingly) based their philosophy of living – be they Christian or secular, and

replace them with strikingly different ones in order to engage with Wimber Vineyard concepts. He was in fact suggesting that the worldview that would be found in the developing nations (where the experiences particularly of Wagner and Kraft originated) was the one that needed to be adopted. It was like saying that God could not inhabit or operate in the worldview of developed nations.

The principle that in order to engage with Christianity, personal change is necessary, is scriptural as is evidenced in the discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus in John Ch. 3. The change that Wimber was suggesting is not about embracing Christianity as such, but a perspective of Christianity which he highlighted and gave importance to which needed further adjustments to the mind-set in order to be able to appreciate the concepts of signs and wonders and put them into practice.

## **6.2. What Are Wimber's New Worldview Dominant Discourses?**

What were the constructions and discourses that Wimber Vineyard Christians needed to adopt as taken-for-granted ways of making sense of the philosophy contained within this setting?

As I discuss this question, I will make reference to the six discourses I have identified in chapter 6, the analysis part of my thesis. This will show that not only are these discourses illustrated in the practises of Wimber but also in his theology. The discourses are, 1, 'Science and Knowledge': a supernatural world view discourse, 2, 'Expectation and Suggestibility': a discourse of anticipation, 3,

‘Leadership’: a discourse of charisma, 4, ‘What God Wants: God’s desires and performance discourse, 5, ‘Commanding God’: a controlling discourse and 6, ‘Phenomena’: a discourse of mystery.

Wimber stated openly that the writings and relationships he had with others heavily influenced his ideas and theology. In drawing up what comprised the worldview or construction required for participating in signs and wonders, he cited particularly the works of Blamires (1963), Kraft (1979), and Ladd (1974) and the work of plus his relationship with C. Peter Wagner as being especially influential (J Wimber and Springer, 1992 p. 130).

#### **6.2.1. The Kingdom Of God**

The first construction is that of ‘Kingdom of God’. This construction is one that embodies the other discourses which I will identify later. Wimber drew on Ladd (1974) who stated, “Christian faith announces the Kingdom of God as the goal of history and the only hope of man’s redemption...It is God’s sovereignty consummated by the annihilation of everything hostile to it” (in J Wimber, 1988, p. 8 conference notes). We see here straightaway that this is a substantial concept where hostilities are involved in the construction of the Kingdom of God. It feels like an all consuming notion with no room for anything else. “The goal of history” – the establishment of the kingdom of God and the idea that man needs this redemption is big talk as is the image created by the “annihilation of everything hostile”. There are also implications regarding the end times, more details of which later. Wimber defended his construction of this thinking when he stated

that in the New Testament, Jesus always combined healing with the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. "Through healing the sick Jesus defeated Satan and demonstrated his rule" (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 54). This could be seen as an overview as Wimber saw it of the implications for Jesus when He healed the sick.

Wimber claimed that ignoring Jesus' healing ministry demonstrated a pattern that has been overlooked by Christians, that they neglected to follow the example Jesus set of healing the sick appropriately. As Pytches (1985) explained, when Jesus told his disciples to 'obey everything I have commanded you', he [Pytches] began to see that 'everything' included the ministry of signs and wonders (p. 11). The disciples proclaimed the kingdom, as they performed the works, healings and miracles of the kingdom. Wimber said that "if he [Jesus] is our model of faith and practice, we cannot ignore his healing ministry" (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 58). Wimber sought to authenticate this point by citing many of the healings on record throughout church history and how he said they contributed towards the growth of Christianity (J Wimber and Springer, 1992 appendix A). *Power Evangelism* (1992) also includes appendices in which signs and wonders in the twentieth century are detailed. He went to considerable lengths to validate his point and defend his assertions that signs and wonders were critical to evangelism and combating the forces hostile to the kingdom.

It seems to me that Wimber did give this one aspect of healings, signs and wonders considerable priority but of course this is one thing of very many of importance to the establishment of the kingdom of God. Jesus, when asked

which is the greatest commandment replied, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And a second is like it: you shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Matt 22: 37-39). It is not difficult to include healing, miracles and so on in this commandment, but so many other things Jesus taught are ignored. It is not the focus of this study to go into this issue, but majoring on one concept is to the detriment of other greater commandments which receive no mention by Wimber. Establishing these concepts regarding the Kingdom of God is an initial phase in the development of this worldview. Wimber then went on to explain details within this main Kingdom of God prevailing discourse as he saw it.

#### **6.2.2. The Now And The Not Yet**

Wimber said that the church is a body of people caught up in the tension between the Kingdom of God and a sinful world, between the age to come and the present evil age. He drew again on Ladd (1974) who suggested that the Kingdom of God has created the church and continues to work in the world through the church. The Kingdom of God will be established, not by man attempting to overcome evil, but by “a supernatural, world transforming act of God” (Ladd 1974, p. 9, conference notes), which is also referred to as the second coming of Christ. This almost seems to be saying that man (I have remained with Ladd’s way of referring to people) attempting to overcome evil (in this case by healing the sick and so on), is futile because it is a world transforming act of God that will accomplish that. Even though Wimber may have drawn on an inappropriate support for his argument he was not deterred.

As part of the church, Christians are seen as “drafted into a fierce spiritual battle” (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 38) against Satan and evil. Wimber said that it is known that Satan attacks on three fronts, the flesh, the world and by direct assault. He explained that flesh alluded to the sinful passions that reside in individuals. He said the world referred to the lure of materialism, power, sexual immorality, and the quest for self fulfilment. Warfare against the direct assaults of Satan described the spiritual battle into which individuals were drafted. Wimber told us that “the Kingdom of Satan was and is Christ’s real enemy and there is a war going on...The final outcome of the battle is assured through Christ’s death, resurrection and ascension to the place of all authority...but Satan is not yet cast out and he will not be until Christ returns to establish his kingdom for ever. So we are caught between two ages” (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 40).<sup>15</sup> Pytches described this as “The kingdom of God is ‘here now’ and ‘not yet!’” (D. Pytches, 1985, p. 18). So a significant dominant discourse held is one of a battlefield and warfare where the Christians are positioned as the army recruits, defending and also, by performing signs and wonders, advancing the Kingdom of God.

Percy commented on the undue attention paid to Satan by Wimber as being no accident. He suggested that a charismatic leader such as Wimber needs an adversary and that as Wimber saw most sickness as being caused by Satan or sin should prayers for healing fail, it would be Satan contributing to the lack of success (Percy, 1996b, p. 55). Making reference to the death of a good friend of Wimber’s, David Watson, for whom Wimber and his team had prayed for because

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<sup>15</sup> ‘Science and Knowledge’: a supernatural world view discourse is illustrated here.

David was dying from cancer, “one of Wimber’s team declared on radio that David Watson was a casualty of Satan in the war between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness” (Benn and Burkill, 1987).

### **6.2.3. Personal Evil And Evil Spirits/Demons**

The second dominant discourse part of this construction, according to Wimber and Springer (1992) was “an acute and sensitive awareness of the power and spread of evil upon the human scene. Evil...is constantly assaulting God’s people” (p. 144). Wimber Vineyard Christians saw themselves as in an army in combat with Satan. There was sin and there were evil spirits “lurking” about (Wimber and Springer 1992, p. 144). Ladd (1974) told us that there are hostile elements, opposing forces seeking to frustrate God’s rule. Ladd’s language and concepts were strong as he continued, “Evil...is a terrible enemy of human well-being and will never be outgrown or abandoned until God has mightily intervened to purge evil from the earth” (p. 8, conference notes). Ladd claimed that evil had societal character and that this age would be characterised by wars, international conflict, and family strife. He did not offer any support for this statement although there are verses in the Bible which speak of wars and rumours of wars, Matt 24:6 and families divided in Luke 12: 52-53, Ladd did not draw on these. He also said that opposition and suffering may be expected as normal experience (Ladd 1974).

Conflict or hard times and difficulties, viewed often by Christians as ‘attacks of the enemy’ has a definite place in substantiating the positionings held by individuals,

the thinking being that if Christians are being seen by Satan as a threat to his evil reign on earth, then he 'attacks' those involved. Tomlinson said that Christians could be heard explaining details of their lives in terms of God or Satan, "If anything good happens it is the Lord: 'The Lord helped me find this job' or ' God showed me what I should do'" (Tomlinson, 1995, p. 54). The converse of this scenario is also true, the car not starting, a domestic appliance not functioning, problems with the heating, or of course illness, accidents and so on positioning the person involved as being the focus of an attack of the enemy. The way things that go wrong in everyday life are interpreted as the devil attacking them, an assault of the enemy preventing the advance of the kingdom of God. The implications of this for an individual who perceived themselves to be singled out for attack could be that whatever they were doing must be achieving God's purpose by advancing the Kingdom of God. Suffering, as we have seen earlier, is held on one side and little acknowledged in Wimber's theology, especially in adherents who are expected to be able to worship or pray their problems and suffering away or perhaps see it as God refining them and part of their spiritual growth process.

To summarise Ladd's (1974) teachings as incorporated into the construction by Wimber, he described the severe conflict between good and evil which was focussed on the church. The church found itself in tension between history and eschatology. Ladd (1974) explained that he found a sense of imminence in the teachings of Jesus which he suggested that God purposed, to give a sense of urgency, so that the pressure of the end times was felt. The way the concept of evil and the effect that actions and beliefs have on the bringing about of the

Kingdom of God, acted as a motivating force for Wimber Vineyard Christians. They positioned themselves as caught up in the warfare, involved in bringing about the Kingdom of God and fighting evil by facilitating and performing signs and wonders in themselves and others.

Wimber continued to develop his ideas and to draw on his main influences, Wagner, Kraft, Blamires, and Ladd. Using the book *Christianity with Power* by Charles Kraft (1979), Wimber outlined further assumptions from the life of Jesus which he said should be held as normative for all Christians (J Wimber and Springer, 1992) and which therefore contributed to the warfare concepts of the kingdom. Wimber and Springer (1992) summarised Kraft (1979) who suggested that Jesus' worldview (which He would have had like everyone else, there was after all lifestyle and culture at the time Jesus lived) included assumptions regarding the nature of God. Kraft stated that God was a father with absolute authority over his children. He loved them, but demanded obedience. He was involved with His creation and stood against oppressors. Secondly Kraft suggested Jesus assumed the existence of the spirit world including angels, demons and Satan (this is the only assumption that appears in Wimber and Springer (1992) with no supporting biblical references). Kraft also said that Jesus believed in two kingdoms, those of God and Satan which were at war with each other, but the Kingdom of God is assured of victory. Jesus assumed conflict of power and confrontation, and sent the disciples out in the knowledge that they would experience opposition (Kraft 1979 in Wimber and Springer 1992). However, there is some dispute regarding Kraft's (1979) intentions when he wrote this. Wimber indicated that Jesus' worldview should be held as normative for

Christians. However Smith (2007) quoted Kraft, “A position that sees it necessary for people to totally replace their cultural worldview with something called a Christian worldview does not really understand the Scriptures” (Kraft, 1979, R.A. Smith, 2007, p. 4). Smith went on to say, “Though Kraft believes that Jesus had a worldview, he does not seem to want to say that all Christians should adopt Jesus’ view and make it the basis of Christian civilization. Instead, we are told that Jesus’ worldview “provides for us the clearest picture of how God’s ideals are to be combined with the human perspectives of a typical worldview” (R.A. Smith, 2007, p. 4). So it would appear that Wimber may have attributed more regarding worldviews than Kraft intended in order to support his own point.

### **6.3. Jesus’ Worldview Versus A Secular Worldview**

Wimber and Springer (1992) continued by stating that Jesus received all His power from the Holy Spirit, that whoever leads should seek to serve and that Jesus only did what he saw his Father in heaven doing. (This phrase is one that occurs many times in Wimber’s writing and constitutes a crucial concept in the justification of Wimber’s worldview). Wimber concluded that Jesus saw miracles, signs and wonders as normal events, not as unusual intrusions by God. In any event healings were normal in this culture in New Testament times. Healers, magicians and physicians (who were not trusted – Mark 5:26 tells of the woman who had spent all she had on long treatment by many doctors and had become worse rather than better) were commonplace. People who needed a cure sought out the healers and magicians as there were no other facilities available to the

common people (Botha, 1996). So maybe Wimber too easily transposed situations from New Testament times and culture to the present day expecting a replication. As Botha points out “Health and sickness are always culturally defined...The interpretation of the New Testament in particular suffers from the tendency to utilise modern, Western, medical scientific concepts and models without regard for cultural differences” (Botha, 1996, p. 4).

The point Wimber was making focused on the contrast between how he had described Jesus’ worldview with secular worldviews, because of the impact this had on how Wimber saw his concept of power evangelism. Wimber then suggested that Vineyard Christians should have the worldview that is “rooted in the way Jesus saw things: power wrapped in love” (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 146).

This Wimber Vineyard worldview was contrasted by Wimber with how westerners saw the world and Wimber (1992), drawing on Blamires (1963) *The Christian Mind* this time, cited four characteristics contained within the secular western constructs that would inhibit a westerner’s ability to practise signs and wonders or power evangelism (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 139). The first characteristic is secularism which Wimber described as a an assumption that divine intervention is not included in the suppositions of a secular mind. Secondly, self reliance was described by Wimber as a desire to control everything and feel little need for help with anything. Thirdly, materialism was seen as science being able to account for everything and that is the extent of reality. Patterns, laws, and principles had been developed and were seen as being reliable. This

materialistic thinking warped convictions about the supernatural world of angels, demons, heaven, and hell. And lastly, rationalism made reason the chief guide in all matters of life. Anything that could not be explained by human reason was rejected by those holding the western worldview. This summary went against the Wimber Vineyard Christian worldview then, because angels, demons, miracles, and God could not be scientifically measured. “Christian signs and wonders are beyond rationality (not irrational), but they serve a rational purpose: to authenticate the Gospel” (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 142). So the dominant, taken for granted western discourses of science were seen by Wimber to assert a powerful influence on the minds of people, few being conscious of the strength of the influence and the impact that it had on how an individual’s interpretation of the supernatural in Scripture is affected, that is it blocks an appreciation of signs and wonders.

## **7. A Shift In The Worldview Adopted Is Necessary For Signs And Wonders**

Wimber and Springer said, “Most western Christians must undergo a shift in perception to become involved in a signs and wonders ministry, a shift towards a worldview that makes room for God’s miraculous intervention. It is not that we allow God’s intervention: he does not need our permission. The shift is that we begin to see his miraculous works and *allow* them to affect our lives” (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 147). There is a significant contradiction here regarding giving permission for God’s intervention which I explore later in the thesis.

Johnson (1995) gave an example from a service he attended at Anaheim Vineyard where the prayer was “Holy Spirit, we give you permission to be who

you want to be in our midst...” (Johnson, 1995, p. 2). It is a phrase heard many times from Wimber and those who emulate his method and style.<sup>16</sup> Steven also gave an example of this, citing a leader beginning the prayer ministry part of a Wimber Vineyard style service by saying, “Father we give you permission to send your Holy Spirit to show us whatever you want to do tonight” (Steven, 1999, p. 189). When you think about this, it actually sounds quite condescending that humans graciously give their permission for God or the Holy Spirit to act. Although Christians were continually encouraged to be open to the Holy Spirit, the timing of any interventions was decided by the leader. There was a significant assumption of control displayed over the actions of God and the Holy Spirit.<sup>17</sup> Judson Cornwall talking about faith said, “faith is often not taught as a divine enablement that will reveal God and His kingdom to the believer; it usually is projected as an energy that can force God to obey the commands of the practitioner. Faith as I have heard it declared on the lecture platforms deifies man and humanizes God” (Cornwall, 1981, p. 12). This point is discussed further later in the thesis.

Because people in a secular worldview were taught or came to expect certain things, usually things that can be contained and controlled, Wimber was contending that a western science based construction of the world would, by and large obstruct the experience of miracles, signs and wonders as he saw them expressed in the writings of others and in Scripture.

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<sup>16</sup> Wimber Vineyard style is characterised by an order in services, worship first, testimonies, teaching and ministry time. Wimber, J. and Wimber, C. (1995) *Worship: Intimacy with God. Equipping the Saints*, 1: (1).

<sup>17</sup> Leadership: a discourse of Charisma is illustrated here.

### 7.1. What Can Happen When A New Worldview Is Adopted?

This new perception was Wimber's way of seeing things, the construction he put on things which I would suggest contrived a situation which made it possible for individuals to be involved in the supernatural. They could at least engage in a way of conceptualising things that allowed them to position themselves as participants in a spiritual warfare, fighting in a battle, advancing a spiritual kingdom which they believed was crucial to do. This would mean that God could supernaturally intervene and bring the reign of evil to an end. Wimber did seem to more than suggest that the atmosphere that facilitated signs and wonders could be contrived by creating the appropriate sociological and psychological environment for such manifestations to occur.<sup>18</sup>

### 7.2. A Training Model For Healing The Sick?

In *Power Healing*, Wimber explained that having seen his first healing, he asked himself whether it would be possible to develop a model from which large numbers could be *trained to heal the sick* (emphasis mine) (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 181). He went on to explain that he developed a model whereby any Christian could learn to pray for the sick – the implication being that this would result in divine healing.<sup>19</sup> This model incorporated understanding that God wants to heal the sick, that in the equipping training seminars, *everyone* would learn to exercise the power of God (pp. 181 – 183).

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<sup>18</sup> Phenomena: a discourse of mystery is illustrated here.

<sup>19</sup> Divine healing is Wimber's preferred term over and against terms such as miracle healings - Satan and demons can do this, faith healing - a persons faith is the source, not Jesus, supernatural healing - again, demons and supernatural beings can perform supernatural acts and psychic healing - occult practices are involved.

The implications for this are, to my mind, significant. Does this mean that the trainees are learning to manipulate God into being forced to heal? Is it possible that if people create the right environment, or employ the right strategies God can be coerced into action, or is any action that is seen interpreted as something else? Maybe God is being made to look as though He is honouring His word, and also as though He is honouring the actions of those Christians who practice praying for the sick, should healing occur? Packer said “If you are not careful ... prayer for signs and wonders becomes very similar to magic; you are trying to manipulate God. You think you have a way of doing it. You have a magical technique for making him do what you want” (Packer, 1986, p. 7). Or is it possible that what happens is something else altogether, an issue explored further in the rest of the thesis.<sup>20</sup>

Wimber went on to explain how a healing environment where people create an atmosphere of faith and hope is generated. “There are actions that we can take which increase faith for healing” (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 186). He went on to say that the most significant action was worship; that places where there was corporate worship could be powerful environments for healing. He said, the Holy Spirit is invited to come. A place in the programme is set aside for healing which the people attending would already know was going to take place. Wimber said, “I try to create an atmosphere that is clinical and rational...while at the same time it is powerful and sensitive” (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 187).<sup>21</sup> During the ‘clinic time’ as he called it, first healing was demonstrated by trained members

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<sup>20</sup> ‘Commanding God’: a controlling discourse is illustrated here.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Expectation and Suggestibility’: a discourse of anticipation is illustrated here.

of the healing team while Wimber described what was happening and why certain things were done the way they were. Then, as there were always people present who needed healing, the trainees got to practice on them while the trained members were available to help the 'novices'. Failure is expected and a place where the novices feel helped and accepted is also part of the environment created. Wimber has a chapter in *Power Healing* entitled Not Everyone is Healed (p. 159) which includes an account of his own lack of healing, biblical stories of those who were not healed and a brief discussion of the 'now and not yet' concept which Wimber adopted from Ladd who said that we are living between the first and second comings of Christ and this provided an "interpretive key for understanding why the physical healing that Christ secured for us in or through the atonement is not always experienced today" (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 169). So although Wimber has addressed the issue of why not everyone is healed, he gave very little attention to the sick who did not experience healing in terms of the impact not being healed may have on them or how they could be subsequently cared for. For professional therapists this would be most unacceptable, going against most ethical frameworks. For those whose professional body is the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy there is a requirement to offer clients beneficence, which would include working within one's limits of competence and ensuring the client's best interests were served. An implication of this would be to refer a client to another colleague if they could not be helped (Bond et al., 2010, p. 3). Hunt (1995) and Richter (1997) both have drawn attention to the strong possibility that the phenomena associated with clinic prayer ministry has been consciously induced as a deliberate strategy. The course run by Wimber and C. Peter Wagner at Fuller

from 1982 until 1986, MC 510, taught students how to create the most fertile environment both psychologically and sociologically together with the emotional and physiological states of believers where the Holy Spirit could be said to be experienced. They did this by observing apparent manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the emotional and physiological states of believers and learning how they could be induced, Wagner (1983b) in (Hunt, 1995). Wimber stated that the material he drew on when writing *Power Healing* and *Power Evangelism* was from this course (MC 510) run at Fuller (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 15). In 1986 however, the leadership at Fuller brought the course to a close saying that a seminary was for academic activity and clinics were more the domain of the local church (Jackson, 1999). I explore all this in much more detail through the remainder of the thesis.

## **8. Conclusion**

I feel there are profound issues with the foundations of this movement not just because of the way Wimber developed his theology to fit what he was engaged in, but also because some of the people Wimber became involved with and was clearly influenced by had extra Biblical ways of operating.

This activity is reminiscent of that of Kathryn Kuhlman (of course Lonnie Frisbee and Kathryn knew each other and Wimber said he had come to appreciate and learn from her (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 40)) in whose miracle crusades people were knocked off their feet at the sweep of her arm just as had happened at the 'mothers day service' previously mentioned (Kuhlman, 1975). Others who

studied and followed her ways such as Benny Hinn also operated in a similar manner (Hinn, 2011). It is almost as though exercising this kind of activity is 'catching' – passed from one practitioner to the next. Whilst I can easily accept that there cannot be Biblical precedent for everything for us all to follow at all times because cultures develop and change, there is nothing approaching this kind of activity in scripture. What is achieved by seeing crowds of people flying off their feet, falling to the ground, out of control? People in positions of leadership for whatever reason who find they have such power over others must surely learn to be discerning about what they attribute it to and how they use it. This thesis is not the place to open a debate about hypnotism or mesmerism and the like, but people who attend such shows have a good idea of what may happen when they get there. A hypnotism show entertains the audience by creating a situation where people voluntarily allow themselves to be hypnotised and then perform, under the direction of the showman/woman, acts which amuse the rest of the audience. Can Christians, and others who attend Wimber Vineyard events where they have a good idea that the Holy Spirit is more than likely to be invoked, apparently be heavily influenced by the person leading the event?<sup>22</sup> Wimber himself, in the video series (J Wimber, 1985g) related an incident where he approached a group of people waiting for prayer and as he put his hand up, only to ascertain what was happening, all the people were knocked down. He said, "I didn't mean to raise my hand in a sense to do anything. I was going to pray for the first person who I was walking towards. I remember just standing there being stupefied by that. Why would God do that? It didn't make

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<sup>22</sup> 'Expectation and Suggestibility': a discourse of anticipation is illustrated here

any sense to me” (J. Wimber, 1985f). He made no attempt at any explanation and certainly did not consider that it may not have been God at all.

There are also the background influences Wimber mentioned in *Power Healing* (1986) of Kathryn Kuhlman (p. 40) and there is a work of Agnes Sanford, *The Healing Power of the Bible* (A. Sanford, 1969) included in the bibliography of *Power Healing* (p. 301). “Sanford was a free spirit. Her rebellion against orthodox Christianity led her to rely on personal experience over what God says in His Word. Several times in her books she expressed the thought, “experience comes before theology.”” (Gumprecht, 1997, p. 17). Dr. Gumprecht, in her book *Abusing Memory: The Healing Theology of Agnes Sanford*, said, “[Agnes Sanford’s] criteria for truth was “Does it work?” It was not “what does the Word of God say?” She [Sanford] wrote, “Religion is an experience of God. Theology is merely an attempt to explain the experience” (A Sanford, 1983, p. 2)”.

One of the themes that draws these influences together is their innovativeness and this appears to have been attractive to Wimber, which is maybe not surprising as he needed to come up with an innovative approach to distinguish the philosophy of his new movement from the traditional church which he felt so disillusioned by and who by enlarge could not effectively work with the church growth principles and practices he spent four years trying to deliver to them. The significance of the influences of these and other people might also be ascertained by asking if it would be possible to reject the showmanship and super naturalness of Frisbee and the Wagners, the worldviews of Kraft together with their certainty and innovativeness, the mysticism of Kuhlman and the Kingdom theology of Ladd

and still have enough of Wimber left? I'm not sure that his personable character would be sufficient. He had used his character and personality before, during his days in the music industry and although he was always a skilled and affable person, he did not achieve the same high profile then.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE OF WIMBER VINEYARD MINISTRY**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter explores the developments in the period between the time when Wimber was alive and more directly influencing how things were done in the Vineyard and the changes and developments in practice in current times.

Since the death Wimber in 1997, whilst there has been numerical growth in Vineyard UK significant developments have come in the spin-off organisations. New Wine was started by David Pytches who was among the first to host Wimber in the UK at the Anglican church where he was the vicar, St Andrews Chorley Wood. At around the time of the early visits of Wimber during the early 1980s, Pytches hosted a support network for leaders involved with renewal in more mainstream denominational churches, for example Anglican, Baptist and Methodist churches. The New Wine summer conference was started in 1989 and held at Shepton Mallet, Bath and West County Showground. New Wine is not a church itself, the churches that belong retain their own original identity and within their individual church life, adopt or express Wimber Vineyard ways, styles of worship, prayer ministry and so on. Primarily, the culture and expression of New Wine is very similar to that of Vineyard. However, the settings are different as evidenced in (Steven, 2002, p. 63). The churches he studied retained their

denomination and as a feature, held some services that used a Wimber Vineyard structure of worship, teaching and prayer ministry.

There are other organisations that are affiliated with or are further spin offs from Wimber Vineyard. These include Alpha, New Frontiers and Soul Survivor. Alpha has the specific purpose of presenting the elements of the Gospel to those who have no knowledge of it over a series of weekly meetings which include the Holy Spirit weekend away. This weekend is where the flavour of Wimber Vineyard is most easily seen as it is the time when those who have attended are offered prayer ministry. Team members are encouraged to face the person they are praying for and ask the Holy Spirit to come, welcome Him. When they see signs of His working, wait for further directions. Ask how to encourage and impart gifts; encourage the person to start to speak in another language and do so yourself...Refuse to consider that nothing has happened (Alpha, 1997, pp. 16,17). As will be shown later, these instructions are very similar to Wimber's Five Step Prayer Model for Healing (J. Wimber, undated).

Soul Survivor was born out of New Wine youth work in 1993 and subsequently became a separate youth organisation. Under the leadership of Mike Pilavachi (a former youth leader at St Andrews, Chorley Wood), Soul Survivor not only hosts Christian youth festivals, but also has an established church congregation in Watford, UK. Since it began, Soul Survivor has gone global, having representation in Australia, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, South Africa and USA ([www.soulsurvivor.com](http://www.soulsurvivor.com)). There is no evidence however, that Soul Survivor UK has spread beyond the Watford home base. (There are other

references to 'Soul Survivor' on the internet, but there is no apparent connection). There is a lot of activity based at the church there; three services each Sunday (around 800 capacity), monthly celebrations (two on the same day in order to accommodate the large number of visitors), training for youth leaders, 'SoulSista' for girls, 'SoulNet' for youth leaders, 'Momentum' for students and not least their main events, the summer festivals which attract around 28,000 people to the different weeks put on in two locations, Shepton Mallet and Stafford County Show-grounds ([www.soulsurvivor.com](http://www.soulsurvivor.com)).

It is of interest that this and other events (New Wine, Vineyard, Spring Harvest and New Frontiers) share the same pool of high profile, figurehead worship leaders who move easily between events and locations (Goodliff, 2009). Andrew Goodliff has identified that over the last fifteen years a "group of prolific, Christian songwriters, whose worship songs have found a global audience" (Goodliff, 2009) have emerged. Matt Redman, Tim Hughes, Martyn Layzell and Paul Oakley (his study was limited to these four, but there are more) each participate in or have been involved in recording for New Wine, Soul Survivor, New Frontiers and Spring Harvest. Goodliff said, "The values of Vineyard, its emphasis on worship and signs and wonders are evident in both New Wine and Soul Survivor" (Goodliff, 2009, p. 254). He also said, "At a worship service of New Wine, Soul Survivor or New Frontiers, up to thirty or forty minutes will be spent singing, followed by a talk/sermon, and then followed by a time of "ministry" (which consists of people being prayed for and more singing)" (Goodliff, 2009, p. 255).

## **1. Wimber Vineyard Services And Events**

Wimber explained that the events he led were divided into three parts: worship, instruction and a clinic (or ministry time). This format is replicated in just about every type of Wimber Vineyard event and the conferences and services I have attended have been no exception. This format is also born out in the video clips referred to later in the study where Wimber taught the MC 510 course and is repeated also in the accounts by Steven (1999, 2002) and Cartledge (2003) in their descriptions of similar Wimber Vineyard based services and events.

### **1.1. Participant Observation**

I am using the methodology of participant observation at this point in the study as the focus now is on the structure of more contemporary Wimber Vineyard events and how they work in practice to achieve what Wimber stated it would, that is leading the people through from when they come in (and get their coffee and doughnuts) to when they leave, having had the opportunity to engage in prayer ministry. The observation demonstrates the three fold structure of the event, a Sunday morning service in this case, and the progression through from worship, testimonies and the preach/teach, which in this case was clearly aimed at particular personal issues. This could have had the effect of preparing and pointing congregation members towards prayer ministry for a particular purpose. A Wimber Vineyard event is not random, it is planned in order to achieve the end goal. Achieving the response can have several effects, and one of them is that it validates all that has gone before in the context of the event.

As I examine the structure and effect of the strategies used in Wimber Vineyard, participant observation of this more contemporary event shows the effect of these strategies in a local Wimber Vineyard Sunday morning service. The discourse analysis undertaken in chapter 6 of my thesis examines Wimber's teaching as it was delivered by him in one of his equipping events with the purpose of understanding the impact and effects on both Wimber and the delegates at the conference of the material he delivered and the manner in which it was delivered. The participant observation in this instance, might be described as being above the radar and the discourse analysis, under the radar, looking for meanings effects, implications, functions, resistance and counter resistance which are revealed as the researcher engages with the texts.

## **2. Account Of A Wimber Vineyard Service**

This three fold format was apparent at the conference in 1984 at which I was a delegate and was also evident at the Vineyard Church, UK service I attended on January 15, 2006. Using the following description and evaluation of this service I will discuss where and how prayer ministry fits into the three phase structure and also what part the elements of the services have to play leading up to ministry time and the practice of prayer ministry. This is one of many meetings attended all of which followed a similar format of which this is a detailed example.

## **2.1. Setting**

The Vineyard UK Church community that I visited on January 15<sup>th</sup> 2006 as a participant observer, gathered in a secondary school in England and used the main school hall for its morning meeting (I have, for ethical reasons kept the precise location of this community confidential). Other rooms were also used for the children's work and the kitchen facilities were used for offering drinks before and after the service. The hall was set out using the stage area as the focal point with chairs in rows facing the stage. As I entered, I observed a screen, a computer and video projector that were at that point, being used to display information regarding events organised for the coming week and progress reports on projects that the church was running. I estimated that there were between 250 and 300 chairs available and most of them were occupied by the time the service began. The congregation consisted of a mix of people, mostly younger, probably under the age of forty, with a few older people. Both couples and groups of singles, that is, small groups of younger females and younger males sitting together, were observed, as were young families. The people were dressed casually, mostly in jeans, trainers and so on.

## **2.2. First Phase – Worship**

The service started at 10:30 a.m. with opening prayer led by the person who went on to lead the worship, at which time the presence of the Holy Spirit was invoked by saying, 'Come Holy Spirit'. Using this rhetoric is typical at Wimber Vineyard events.

An extended 'time of worship' then commenced. This was led by a male worship leader. There is usually someone whose specific role it is to lead this part of the service. He was, as worship leaders are in many churches throughout the world that adopt contemporary styles of worship, supported by a band, which included guitarists, two female support singers, percussion, keyboards and so on. The worship time consisted entirely of congregational songs flowing from one to the next, the worship leader interjecting and announcing the next song and why it was being sung less and less as the time progressed. Video projection was used to introduce and display the words to the songs used during the worship time. This time of worship lasted about thirty five minutes.

### **2.3. Second Phase - Preaching/Instruction**

Following the worship time, the congregation was invited by the preacher (who was the senior pastor and church leader) to stay in the presence of God and have responsive hearts, to be open and the Lord would release words to them. He continued to explain that they were kingdom people and called to be obedient. From the notes I made at the time, I identified phrases and themes that were used towards the congregation. When the congregation 'pressed into and prayed into the things of God, they then would fall into line, and God would release blessing and healing'. They would be 'healed and touched'. They had to 'stand strong in conflict as in Ephesians 6:10'. They were to 'render the opposition powerless'. 'They had an enemy who hated them. 'The agenda of the enemy was to maim them. They needed to 'know their enemy, strategy and defences'.

The leader spoke more about the enemy being the people's accuser and the one who condemned them which would lead to them becoming depressed about themselves, their disobedience and the distortion the enemy could bring about'. The 'enemy could mess with their hearts and heads and their identity, so that they compared themselves with others which resulted in them feeling insecure' and so on. The leader went on to ask what else might the 'enemy do to deactivate them (in the service of the Lord)? There was no warning before the next sentence. "You are what you weigh!" This exclamation came out of the blue from the preacher. He told the congregation they needed to be free from the bondage of their weight and the deep seated lies that were being whispered into their ears by the enemy. The example of being undermined through their weight was given as a strategy of the enemy to 'deactivate' them. They were then exhorted to 'take every thought captive'. 'God doesn't want this'. 'They needed to recognise the lies, accusing voices and condemnation'.

There are several aspects of this part of the service which merit attention. The main narrative reflects the worldview put forward by Wimber regarding the kingdom of God, the presence of the enemy who is set against both Christians and others believing and being saved. The leader/preacher used phrases towards the congregation which reinforced this concept such as, they were 'kingdom people', they had an enemy who hated them and who wanted to maim, accuse, condemn, mess with and deactivate them resulting in them becoming depressed about themselves, their identity and their security. This clearly describes the concept of spiritual warfare and begins to point people towards the act of prayer ministry.

He chose to focus on an issue with which many would struggle – that of weight. He also concentrated mainly on the women in the congregation. He told them that they were being lied to by the enemy. He had previously said that being kingdom people required ‘obedience’ and that when the people ‘pressed into the things of God’, ‘blessings and healings’ would be released. The implication could easily have been for those who felt undermined by the issue of their weight that they had been disobedient and not pressed into the things of God enough, thus rendering themselves vulnerable to the strategies of the enemy and therefore ‘deactivated’. The congregation were further told that this was not what God wanted for them, but that they needed to recognise the lies, accusations and condemnation and that the opportunity to come forward for prayer ministry was available.

#### **2.4. Third Phase - Prayer Ministry Time**

The service then moved into a time of prayer ministry when individuals who perceived themselves to be experiencing any of the issues highlighted during the preceding parts of the service were offered the opportunity to come to the front and receive prayer. Although the church leader had previously acknowledged that men as well as women could have problems with food, while everyone remained in their seats he proceeded to pray specifically for the women present in the congregation who might be struggling with eating disorders, to bring them a ‘word of hope’. He also said that they should recognise that ‘God was on their

case', that this matter needed a response from them so that they could be fully engaged.

It was at this point that the women were highlighted specifically as the leader/preacher prayed over the congregation. He referred to the issue as an "eating disorder" rather than as previously, problems with food or weight but said he wanted to bring a word of hope and that God was on their case. They needed to respond in order to be fully engaged – or activated. So could this teaching/instruction have been aimed at generating a response for prayer ministry?

It is not difficult to see that for congregation members affected, demonstrating a response to this message would not be easy for them and potentially embarrassing for those who felt targeted. Those coming forward could have felt exposed. Eating disorders are not restricted to women who are overweight, but that was the tenor of the talk, reference being made to cookie jars, fridges and cakes. So it is fairly obvious that one of the intentions of the teaching/instruction was to generate a response that would lead directly to prayer ministry. There is a sense in which to discuss women with weight issues could constitute an easily identifiable target audience, but as a point of interest, according to the British Heart Foundation in 2008, 67 per cent of men and 60 per cent of women in England were overweight or obese (source *Joint Health Surveys Unit (2009) Health Survey for England 2008. The Information Centre: Leeds.*). So the greater percentage with weight issues generally, were in fact men. Nevertheless, regarding food issues, about two thirds of any group would constitute a ready

made target audience. Almost like a comedian needing laughs in order to know the jokes are funny, it is possible that Wimber Vineyard leaders need to see people receiving prayer ministry to validate their message.

So, at this point, people were invited to move to the area in front of the stage for prayer ministry. There were already others at the front who were going to be prayed for. These were people who were to be church planting soon and also there were those who had just started on a discipleship school being run by the church. Next other members of the congregation were invited to come to the front in order to pray for those who had responded regarding the eating issues. There did not appear to be an appointed team or team members set apart for this role but people were encouraged to come from their seats in the congregation to act as prayer ministers. In this case there was no apparent supervision by the leader or anyone else but this is not always so. It is my observation that teams with leaders and agreed practices perform prayer ministry in Vineyard churches, New Wine churches and events, Vineyard conferences and seminars. As Smith and Smith (2011) said, “We try and train our leaders to understand that we should never meet together and not have ministry timer, we should always have ministry time wherever there is opportunity for it” (D Smith and Smith, 2011, appendix p. 306).

This time of prayer ministry went on for some time – at least fifteen minutes – and as the actual service had concluded, and the congregation were milling around, chatting and leaving and as it would be an invasion of privacy to try and overhear what was happening in the prayer ministry, I left the building.

That at this service there appeared to be no supervision and those praying for the people who had come forward had been summoned from amongst the members of the congregation and apparently were not part of a team designated for the purpose is probably unusual. More often there is a specific team set aside to act as prayer ministers. It does however, reflect the principle of Wimber's teaching, as mentioned earlier, that everyone may be equipped to pray, though praying with someone for their salvation is significantly different to praying with someone regarding highly personal and sensitive issues such as in this case eating difficulties.

Having described the basic Wimber event format and an example of a service, I now explore the different sections in more detail.

### **3. Worship - Evaluation**

One of the areas I have wanted to explore in this study, is how worship leaders understand their role in the context of the whole service or event, and whether worship leaders plan to lead their congregations in certain directions or prepare them with a certain end in view, for example, to see particular responses from the people in prayer ministry. "As lead worshippers...we usher people gently to a place where they can respond to the love of God" (Wilt, 2006, p. 8). How much is this under the direction of the Holy Spirit, as is proposed by the leaders involved at the forefront of worship leading in this setting, or are formats and techniques used that are known to generate a desired response? There has been much written about the worship which takes place as part of Wimber Vineyard services

(Goodliff, 2009, Page, 2004, Steven, 1999, Ward, 2003, Wilt, 2006, Witt, 2006).

Whilst it is not the focus of this study to evaluate in depth the place of music and worship, a review of some of the literature is appropriate. I will argue through the study that this part of the service is designed to prepare, 'soften' and open people up in readiness for the 'preach/instruction' which, more often than not seeks an observable, physical response from the congregation, that is crystallised in prayer ministry. I will explore worship primarily from the perspective of the worship leader, using materials produced by and for the main proponents of worship in and for Wimber Vineyard settings. Taking an analytical look at this material and the issues raised and addressed will assist in identifying the main themes important to this group. Also the influences and impact of worship leading on the practice of prayer ministry will emerge.

### **3.1. The Development Of Worship**

Ward said, "The Charismatic movement is increasingly shaped by the production and consumption of worship as an event, experience and product" (Ward, 2003 p. 197). He articulated the development of the charismatic movement as eclipsing what had gone before, that is in the more conservative and charismatic evangelical times. A whole subculture of in-house recording companies (Vineyard Records), worship leaders, tours, magazines (Vineyard/New Wine/Alpha), festivals (New Wine/Soul Survivor) and events have grown up. Ward contended that this subculture was contextualised within popular culture. He explained that in the early days of renewal when charismatics often met outside their normal Sunday services, there were meetings where smaller

numbers of people primarily prayed and other meetings where larger numbers of people gathered to celebrate and worship. Events such as Spring Harvest, House Church festivals such as Dales and Downs Bible weeks and later Stoneleigh where contemporary charismatic worship was a feature also occurred. New Wine and Soul Survivor are festivals and expressions of Wimber Vineyard worship style. New Wine is more family orientated and Soul Survivor grew out of New Wine as a festival designed primarily for young people, taking their inspiration from Wimber who brought a new sense of priority to worship – talking of it as “the main event” (Ward 2003). For Wimber and Vineyard, worship mediated an intimate encounter with a powerful God (Wilt, 2006). Ward (2003) as we have seen earlier, suggested a significant change from earlier days where the experience of the Baptism in the Spirit was the gateway to spirituality and worship. The Baptism in the Spirit has now largely been replaced in this context, with ideas of intimacy and encounter with God in worship. So Wimber Vineyard style worship can be conducted as part of regular, usually Sunday gatherings or services and also there is Wimber Vineyard style worship conducted in larger, wider settings such as New Wine, Soul Survivor and other events.

I will now explore in more detail the structure of services and events conducted in Wimber Vineyard initially focussing on the strong emphasis placed on worship in these settings, and what influence that may have on the remainder of the services and events. This will also result in a definition of the Wimber Vineyard style.

### 3.1.1. Intimacy

It is of significant interest that for Wimber, the concept of intimacy was not there as an issue in the earlier days of his ministry. Neither *Power Evangelism* nor *Power Healing* make any mention of intimacy and Wimber did not speak about it when he taught the MC 510 course material. The first mention of how intimacy became important to Wimber that I have found was related in *The Dynamics of Spiritual Growth*. Wimber told how he was struggling with the demands and pressures of running Vineyard, the disappointment of not being able to run MC 510 at Fuller any longer and also difficulties with his health. He was entertaining visiting lecturers to Fuller Theological Seminary. Their conversation became personal and Wimber found himself talking to them (a couple) about the deep hurts of his own past, being rejected and abandoned by his father at birth and suffering similar experiences from a series of authority figures. Even though he had become a Christian, his “experience with [his] natural father created a barrier to trusting [his] heavenly Father” (J Wimber and Springer, 1990, pp. 61,62). He had been a Christian for twenty five years and a pastor for eighteen years, (and so would have taught dozens of MC 510 type conferences all over the world by this time (1987) but it was now that that these visitors talked and prayed with him so that he could say that whilst he “knew the Father spiritually, after I’d prayed ... I knew him with greater depth and intimacy. Since that time I have experienced a new kind of freedom and access to God – freedom and access that I never had before” (J Wimber and Springer, 1990). It is a little later in this book that Wimber devotes a short section to intimacy, but not in the context of worship.

Wimber instituted the threefold structure of Vineyard events. The component parts of any Wimber gathering, the worship, the teaching and ministry time were all conducted in specific ways in order to achieve explicit goals. In relation to the richness of Vineyard worship Wimber said, "This has not come about by chance: we have a well-thought-out philosophy that guides why and how we worship God" (John Wimber and Wimber, 1995, p. 1). In *Power Healing* Wimber stated that one of the actions that increased faith for healing was worship. He said, "as we worship God our hearts open to God and faith for healing increases. We do not worship God so he will heal; we worship God because he is God and we are his people" (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 186). So one of the goals of worship was to increase faith for healing. Wimber later talked about worship as intimacy with God, (John Wimber and Wimber, 1995), and said that "In the Vineyard we see five basic phases of worship, phases through which leaders attempt to lead the congregation ....We are headed towards one goal: intimacy with God" (John Wimber and Wimber, 1995, p. 2). He defined intimacy "as belonging to or revealing one's deepest nature to another (in this case God), and it is marked by close association, presence and contact" (John Wimber and Wimber, 1995 p. 2). These phases of worship start with a 'call or invitation to worship' – lets do it now. He talked about song selection for this phase and that leaders should take into account the situation in order to set the appropriate atmosphere.

### **3.2. Wimber Vineyard Worship Programme**

Vineyard Records UK helpfully has a resources section which includes examples of "Worship Sets that Work" (Vineyarduk, 2009). There are examples of songs

suggested there which are said to reach the goal of intimacy with God and which move through the phases and achieve a flow. An example of a song for the call to worship is,

**Come now is the time to worship**

By Brian Doerksen

Come now is the time to worship  
Come now is the time to give your heart  
Come just as you are to worship  
Come just as you are before your God  
Come  
One day every tongue will confess You are God  
One day every knee will bow  
Still the greatest treasure remains for those  
Who gladly choose You now

CCLI Number: 2430948

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The purpose of this initial phase is to set the tone and direct the people to God (John Wimber and Wimber, 1995). Wimber described phase two as 'engagement', a connection with God and others where expressions of love, adoration and so on come forth from one's heart which "when the church comes

together the manifest presence of God is magnified and multiplied” (John Wimber and Wimber, 1995 p. 3). An example of a phase two song is,

### **Awesome God (Your Voice)**

By Vicky Beeching

Your voice is the voice that  
Commanded the universe to be  
Your voice is the voice that  
Is speaking words of love to me  
How can it be?

Awesome God Holy God  
I worship You in wonder  
Awesome God Holy God  
As You draw near I’m humbled  
By Your majesty and the mystery  
Of Your great love for me

Your arms are the arms that  
Hung shining stars in deepest space  
Your arms are the arms that  
Surround me in a warm embrace  
Amazing grace

CCLI Number: 3447507

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The third phase moves into 'expression' where more loving and intimate language may be used. Wimber said that being in this state of intimacy may result in individuals being aware of their shortcomings and confession is involved. As the phase develops, Wimber likened it to physical lovemaking at its climax (John Wimber and Wimber, 1995, p. 3). Examples of these songs are,

### **Refiner's Fire**

By Brian Doerksen

Purify my heart

Let me be as gold, and precious silver

Purify my heart

Let me be as gold, pure gold

Refiners Fire

My hearts one desire

Is to be, holy

Set apart for You my Lord

I choose to be, holy

Set apart for You my master

Ready to do Your will

Purify my heart

Cleanse me from within, and make me holy

Purify my heart

Cleanse me from my sin, deep within

CCLI Number: 426298

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And also,

## **Hungry**

By Kathryn Scott

Hungry I come to you for I know you satisfy,

I am empty but I know your love does not run dry

And so I wait for you, so I wait for you

I'm falling on my knees, offering all of me,

Jesus you're all this heart is living for

Broken I run to you for your arms are open wide

I am weary but I know your touch restores my life

And so I wait for you, so I wait for you

CCLI Number: 2650364

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And,

**In the secret (I want to know You)**

By Andy Park

In the secret, in the quiet place

In the stillness you are there

In the secret, in the quiet

Hour I wait, only for you

cause I want to know you more

I want to know you

I want to hear your voice

I want to know you more

I want to touch you

I want to see your face

I want to know you more

I am reaching for the highest goal

That I might receive the prize

Pressing onwards, pushing every

Hindrance aside, out of my way

cause I want to know you more

CCLI Number: 1810119

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This last song, In the Secret, because there is no mention of Jesus or God could so easily be misinterpreted to be about erotic love which could introduce an element of confusion regarding how the people manage their feelings. In the other songs there are references to people being completely abandoned and laying themselves open. Whilst the people may wish not to be distracted in their worship experience and even in what may be considered to be a safe environment, laying themselves open could possibly present a risk for some.

Wimber and Wimber continue with phase four, the visitation phase “the time to wait for God to respond” (John Wimber and Wimber, 1995, p. 3). The almighty God visits His people. Wimber suggested that people should come prepared for an audience with the King, expecting the Spirit to work. “This visitation is a by product of worship” (p. 3) – not that people worship to gain His presence, but because God dwells in the praises of His people, an audience with the King should be expected, sometimes in the forms of salvation, deliverance, sanctification, healing or prophecy.

As the stated goal of this form of worship is to achieve intimacy with God, there could be a conflict here. Wimber said that the whole goal of worshipping in this way and using this format was intimacy with God, that is being in the presence of God. So presence is a direct outcome of worship according to Wimber as well as God indwelling the praises of His people.

The fifth phase Wimber said, is the giving of substance, for example, love, money, hospitality and so on. Wimber explained that giving money, love,

hospitality or information was not so that goods can be amassed, but because God multiplies and blesses whatever is given, and so that individuals can be more involved in His enterprise. Wimber concluded by saying “As we experience these phases of worship we experience intimacy with God, the highest and most fulfilling calling men and women may know” (John Wimber and Wimber, 1995, p. 3).

Intimacy with God being the highest and most fulfilling calling plainly became very important for Wimber, but whether everyone would agree with the level of importance Wimber gave it is open to question. The greatest commandments in Matthew 22:37 – 39 to love God with all your heart, soul and mind and to love your neighbour as yourself could include intimacy, but would seem to embrace a lot more to aspire to than stopping at intimacy with God. Unless that experience moves Christians on from there then I feel there is a danger for Christians that intimacy with its accompanying pleasant feelings time and again and that becomes a goal in itself.

In the service I attended, it was not difficult to detect themes running through the songs. The initial, more upbeat songs spoke of praise and victory. As the mood developed, the songs became more reflective, speaking of the worshippers being lost, hungry and generally in need and of how they were waiting for Jesus to come. The time of worship climaxed with the theme of the love song and intimacy where the lyrics described how “in love” the people were with Jesus. The tunes of many of the songs appeared very similar to each other and could be

considered to be somewhat hypnotic in nature, so it was not difficult to start to feel mesmerised by the sameness of the songs and music.

As experienced in the service I describe, and also as described by Steven (1999, 2002), the worship time moved from one 'phase' to another, starting with a more upbeat tempo and 'flowing' into a more reflective mood which as Steven (1999) observed, is aimed at achieving 'success'. Success "was measured in terms of whether it brought the members of the congregation "close to God", helped them be "open" or "tuned in to God", and whether it allowed God to "get through to them"" (Steven, 1999, p. 163). So although worship was more about God than the worshipper, respondents in Steven's (1999) study measured the 'success' of a worship time in terms of how 'close' they felt to God.

### **3.3. Worship Leaders**

I have chosen to explore worship further from the perspective of the worship leaders how they understand themselves and how they are perceived in congregations. It will be interesting to see where what has been written in the material I have chosen reflects Wimber's writings and to extract the themes that arise from the texts. I have selected some of the popular texts available written by Matt Redman and Mike Pilavachi and also material available on the Vineyard Records website, [www.vineyardrecordsuk.co.uk](http://www.vineyardrecordsuk.co.uk), *Leading Worship in the Vineyard* by Dan Wilt who served as the Worship Development Coordinator for Vineyard Churches Canada. This document is posted on the website ([www.vineyardrecords.co.uk](http://www.vineyardrecords.co.uk)) as a guide to "serve your Vineyard community with

your heart to lead worship, and grow in the skills and heart values that make a functional song leader into an effective lead worshipper” (Wilt, 2006, p. 2). In this document, Wilt presented worship-leading in the Vineyard as both exciting and dangerous, the exciting bit being leading people on the journey to the heart of God and the danger, he said was of being in a culture that idolises musicians and elevates emotions. The worship leader is in a position to influence the people in ways they would never think possible.

Matt Redman was part of St. Andrews Church, Chorleywood where, as a teenager, he started leading worship. St Andrews Church was one of the first places Wimber visited in the UK when David Pytches was the Vicar. Redman moved from there together with Mike Pilavachi, who was the youth leader, where they jointly started Soul Survivor and led the worship there. Soul Survivor has a home base in Watford, Hertfordshire which is now led by Pilavachi as well as the Soul Survivor festivals every summer. Redman has also more recently been part of Church of Christ the King in Brighton which is itself part of the previously mentioned New Frontiers organisation. He went to Atlanta, USA, where he started a church with others. He has since returned to the UK. He draws much of his inspiration from Vineyard ideas and materials ([www.soulsurvivor.co.uk](http://www.soulsurvivor.co.uk)).

There are/I have observed a number of themes that can be found throughout the material. One of the first themes I have noticed is that of the ‘names’ or personalities that keep appearing. Some people have become acknowledged experts in the field of worship leading. There are those who have been around for a while and have pioneered the whole genre of contemporary Christian

worship leading such as Graham Kendrick, Chris Bowater, Dave Fellingham, Les Moir, Noel Richards and others. And there are those who have emerged more recently, Matt Redman, Robin Mark, Tim Hughes, Chris Jack, Mike Pilavachi, for example, who come from some of the now more well known centres of Wimber Vineyard style worship, such as Holy Trinity, Brompton, London, Soul Survivor, Watford, St Andrews, Chorleywood and Church of Christ the King, Brighton. All of these organisations/churches have or have had strong links with Vineyard. The issue of being high profile, well known and popular is addressed as a potential problem by these writers who supply lots of guidelines in their writing to prevent or correct any difficulty (Pilavachi and Borlase, 1999, Redman, 2003, Wilt, 2006).

Looking at the popular text written by Pilavachi, *For the Audience of One* (Pilavachi and Borlase, 1999) he helpfully has a chapter called The Worship Leader's File – How to Be a Worship Leader Without Being a Donkey. This is a guide to worship leading (written tongue-in-cheek) "without being a donkey" (Pilavachi and Borlase, 1999, p. 108). He first suggested that the leader should be asking God for "direction and inspiration" (p. 109). Having prepared thus, the leader "needs to be acting both as driver and navigator, trying to ascertain what's up ahead, and devising the best route to get there" (p. 109). Pilavachi then moved on to how to choose songs. He gave advice regarding choosing songs suitable for the congregation size and having a balance of the familiar and the new. He said, "There is a skill to getting the balance of songs right" (p. 110). He took a proposed structure from clues taken from how the Israelites worshipped in the temple in the Old Testament. Thanksgiving came first. "When we 'count our

blessings' we are led into the conscious knowledge of His presence" (p. 111). This should be followed by praise as Psalm 100 tells us "enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise" and this is "a handy hint for the start of a worship set" (p. 111). This was extolling God's character. "It is saying, 'You're fantastic because you are kind, because you are good, because you are ever loving, your love is everlasting. You're powerful, you're majestic and glorious'. Consider a relationship; how much more intimate is it to praise someone for their good points than to thank them only for the things they have done? ...Thanksgiving and praise are entry points to adoration and intimacy" (p. 111). He went on to say, "This is the place of two lovers just gazing into each other's eyes. ... People need to be brought into a place of intimacy rather than have it assumed that they are there already" (p. 112). Pilavachi (1999) then took the reader onward, "Having progressed from the outer gates to the most holy place, the private place reserved for those who know how to be intimate with their God, it can be good to end up with songs of adoration, dedication or intercession" (p. 112).

Pilavachi did not replicate the structure or writings of Wimber on this subject, but there is a notable area where they do have the same priority and use similar language, that of intimacy, romantic and erotic love. The phases Pilavachi outlined are not really the same as the five phases Wimber wrote about, but the goal Pilavachi aimed at, achieving intimacy with God remained the same.

Redman also used similar turns of phrase in his *Inside Out Worship* (2005) a book both compiled and contributed to by him. He wrote about "Worship Leading

Essentials” in ten parts throughout the book. By making these ten points concerning authority, truth, shepherding/pastoring, creativity, the prophetic, being visionary, humility, mentoring, heavenly expectations and the Biblical big picture and making use of multiple turns of phrase which seem to be the rhetoric of charismatic Wimber Vineyard style worship, Redman (2005) was conveying his worship leading essentials. He used language that is very ‘in house’ and colloquial and so inside knowledge of what might be meant would be necessary. Initially he seemed to be saying that without “authority and anointing”, which are mysterious and the “divine hand of favour” (p. 16) that leads to “spiritual successes”, exemplary musicians would be unable to lead the people into the “depths of congregational worship” (p. 18). He gave no explanation regarding what spiritual successes or depths of congregational worship were. He indicated that the authority and anointing (again, no explanation on these terms) were arbitrarily bestowed by God, he did not explain how or why. It also felt as though all the attributes Redman referred to concerned continual striving for new experiences, or arriving at a destination on the adventurous worship journey, from which you just want to move on to a “deeper place” (p. 120). The mystical rhetoric continued as he wrote about finding “new dimensions” (p. 51), looking for “greater depths” (P. 52), “sacred congregational moments” (P. 167), and continuing on the “quest for freshness” and “deep encounters” (P. 166), “seeing breakthroughs” (P. 98) and “breaking fresh ground” (p. 98). Continually seeking new levels or bigger and better experiences adds to a phenomenon where individuals are led to think that they need to climb a spiritual ladder aiming to achieve “heightened experiences of worship” (p. 6) and “spiritual successes” (p. 16) for “heavenly and holy moments” (p. 166), which are valued in Wimber. Wilt

(2006) put it like this, "When we gather to worship, we expect every time that each individual, as well as our corporate community, will have an intimate exchange with God. We expect His kingdom to break in at any and every moment, as He heals, delivers and transforms us as broken people" (p. 12). I would suggest to expect that individuals would have an intimate exchange with God and His kingdom to break in at every moment is unrealistic. This whole concept is talked about in the context of romantic 'in love' relationships and no one in a romantic 'in love' relationship expects to be 'in love' all the time. They may always love each other, but not always be 'in love'. Life is not always romantic when the washing up has to be done, the rubbish taken out, work attended to, bills paid, traumas with the children to be dealt with and so on. But Wimber Vineyard worship is expected to achieve a breakthrough every time. This is what is perceived as success and that is what is valued as is stated in the "Our Worship Values" section of Wilt's (2006) booklet. But then the question needs to be asked regarding how achieving the breakthroughs, the heavenly moments, the deep encounters, the intimacy and so on are identified and measured. My observation and experience is that this is largely based on how individuals are left feeling. It is difficult not to equate this with feelings associated with a romantic sexual encounter and although The Song of Solomon may be used as Biblical validation to do this, equating an encounter with God with sexual experience indicates that as Percy suggested, "Too many of Wimber's songs lead the believer into only encountering God through either intimate or 'victorious' words, rhythms and melodies" (Percy, 1996b, p. 80). I would also ask a question regarding the impact on worshippers if they do not achieve this breakthrough and 'success' all the time. I have suggested that to expect Christians in worship to

achieve this constant ultimate in 'success' is unrealistic. For many the impact of not achieving is very difficult to understand, possibly feeling like rejection by God and even by those around them when they feel that these experiences do not happen for them. Individuals can be left feeling that they must be doing something wrong or there must be something wrong with them because they do not achieve this 'success'. An implication of this for some is that surely they will present themselves for more prayer ministry, concluding that there must be some blockage preventing their experience which could be ministered to.

The way I have drawn on these materials by Pilavachi and Redman reflects the way they are presented. In their writings they consider several areas, but in a somewhat disjointed and informal way. Both discussed theology and the importance of being theologically sound, but Redman has not studied theology, (Goodliff, 2009), and I can find no evidence that Pilavachi has either. They both give practical guidance but use rhetoric that is hard to incorporate into the practical, because there is no definition of what it actually all means, so little is measurable. They speak of the experience of worship again using language that is not grounded anywhere, so it would be very difficult for anyone to match their experience of worship against it. There is the considerable bank of rhetoric which Wimber Vineyard leaders draw upon. Redman used no less than fourteen ambiguous phrases which would contribute towards the creation of an atmosphere rather than anything specific as establishing a precise meaning for a phrase like 'congregational moments' would be difficult.

They point out the fact that there are tensions and dangers too, for the worship leaders who contend with the dilemmas of balancing writing songs, leading worship, forming and keeping bands together, rehearsing, recording, leading worship at events outside Vineyard, for example, Spring Harvest and staying focussed. This is a lot of hard work. They can become part of “the cult of celebrity...with the promotion of ‘star’ singer songwriters and the consequent commercial pressure on them to ‘keep producing the goods’” (Harrison, 2006, p. 284). Nick Page commented, “we are seeing a generation of worship leaders who have the profile of rock stars” (Page, 2004, p. 46). On the Vineyard Records UK website the dangers of leading worship are highlighted. “In a culture that idolises musicians and elevates emotions, we stand in front of people, behind a microphone, up on stage, influencing people. Our own hearts sing louder than our musical instruments and our true character touches people in ways we never before thought possible” (Vineyarduk, 2009).

### **3.4. Experiences In Worship**

Steven discussed some of these issues. He spoke of the process congregations are in as part of the whole worship experience. This starts with the necessity for the music group and worship leaders firstly to take the lead and also that they should be worshippers themselves. The worship leaders whom Steven interviewed stated that they perceived their responsibility to be worshippers themselves which in turn would draw the congregation into worship. They felt responsible also for ensuring that the worship time was conducted as a transformative process or as Steven called it, flow (Steven, 1999). They spoke of

how they chose the songs, depending on the Spirit's inspiration and using songs that had special 'anointing' although there is no explanation of what special anointing might mean. Steven also highlighted in his study the pressure felt by the worship leaders to 'move' the congregation. These leaders also spoke of 'successful' times of worship, communicating sincerity which for them was accomplished by the use of facial expression, volume changes and vocal cues. There was considerable expectation from the congregation that the leaders should succeed. The example quoted by Steven is of a congregation member stating that the worship in that service had not been helpful, that the worship leader had not been herself today, and that she had done better before (Steven, 1999, p. 156). It appears to me from reading Steven, that these congregations wanted to see their worship leaders "get into" the worship before they themselves will "get into" it. The leaders in Steven's study conveyed that they looked for signs in the congregation to check that the members were engaging in the transformation process or flow, for example, that their eyes were closed, not looking at the leader, their spiritual eyes thought to be on God. Also hand and arm raising were seen as visible signs that the congregation were really "getting into the worship" (Steven, 1999, p. 158). Other signs such as clapping, dancing, swaying and kneeling indicated that for these congregations worship was expressive, not functional. They are indications to all concerned that the congregation was being "transformed and caught up in God's inspiration...really knowing God" (p. 159). The notion of flow in Steven's (1999) work, he further stated, had been documented by social scientists. He said that in activities requiring concentration people can "attain an identifiable state of consciousness in which they become one with their activity and thus a flow experience emerges"

(Steven, 1999, p. 162). Steven talked about how the process of transformation and 'flow' is achieved with the use of musical links, vocal interpolations and planning a structure. Continued success in the worship process culminated in communion with God or 'intimacy' as the informants (as Steven refers to his participants) in his study preferred to call it. Steven analysed the process a little further and discovered how "various ritual subjects function to create a sense of intimacy with God" (Steven, 1999, p. 163). Starting with communal, high energy celebration and praise songs the music developed to slower ballad type tunes. Body language and gesture also contributed to the process together with the use of clapping and swaying, with facial expressions conveying happiness and enjoyment, to stillness and an intense demeanour, closed eyes and a reduced volume from the voices and instruments together with far less or no interjection between songs from the leader.

Cartledge describing a similar scenario, wrote about worship leaders and how they function given that there is no formal structure to the service. He stated, "I noticed the way in which each leader skilfully managed the liturgical structure of the service. Although there is no formal liturgical structure, no order of service and no clues for the occasional visitor as to what is about to happen next, the members of the church have a clear understanding of the possible sequence of events" (Cartledge, 2003, p. 112). This observation further supports the Wimber prescribed format of events. Cartledge further said, "There are carefully planned and managed times of stillness in which people are encouraged to seek God for themselves and to find Him in the space. ...From out of this space can come the exercising of spiritual gifts such as glossolalia or prophecy, the sharing of

scripture, intercessory prayer and prayer ministry, testimony and items of news for prayer” (Cartledge, 2003, p. 118).

I cannot help but observe that there are other dynamics which could play a part in this process. There is the food; doughnuts have long been associated with Vineyard, sometimes they are available before the start of a service and perhaps also in the middle (D Smith and Smith, 2011) when there could also be a chocolate break, for example, “We take a short break after which baskets of chocolate are passed round”<sup>23</sup> or “when you come along to a Sunday meeting you can expect to find a friendly and warm welcome, look out for the basket of chocolate as you come in”.<sup>24</sup> Sugary refreshments appear to be becoming available in more and more Wimber Vineyard Churches and certainly would not detract from achieving the euphoric ‘intimacy’. There is an accumulation of feel good factors all contributing to the generation of intimacy imagery, communal singing, content of lyrics, tenor of melody and sugar (doughnuts and chocolate). In addition, there is the concept of expectation; the expectation that God will respond, the congregation should expect the Spirit to work as a by product of worship (my pp. 122-123). As Nick Drake said, “a leader can release confidence and assurance to the meeting that what is being seen and experienced is Okay and expected” (Drake, 2010, p. 2). This brings a further very important question into focus – how is it possible to know whether God and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit are at work creating these possible states of success in worship or whether the feelings are human reactions? It could also be asked whether it matters. I am not disputing that God does and is actively involved in many things

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.leicestercityvineyard.org.uk/sundays/sundays>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.tynesidevineyard.org.uk/>

and with many Christians, but I think that in order to maintain a safe environment (which does not mean a boring or uninspiring environment) it is important to understand and attribute what is happening accurately and appropriately.

I would suggest that individuals really do need to have a sense of awareness, both of themselves and of what is happening and what they are engaging in. It is feared that being self-aware would interfere with an experience of self abandonment and openness to God. I would contend that being aware and conscious of what individuals are being open to and not blindly assuming that it can only be God Himself at work is a necessary safety mechanism which maintains a sense of personal responsibility.

#### **4. Prayer Ministry Time - Evaluation**

Next there was the teaching and instruction time about which Wimber said, "...he sheds his light on us through the word and sacrament" (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 186). So the three phases of any Wimber gathering were always and still are worship, teaching and ministry or clinic time, during which prayer ministry or power praying would take place. The worship time will have moved into a preaching/teaching section as described above, during which congregation members would be encouraged to avail themselves of the opportunity for prayer ministry. Cartledge described a prayer ministry time scenario, "(prayer responders) are invited to say what they would like to be prayed for and then one or two people stretch out their hands towards them as they stand and pray over them while at the same time listening for the words of knowledge or promptings

from the Holy Spirit... this is very much part of the Wimber style of prayer ministry" (Cartledge, 2006, p. 210).

#### **4.1. Doing Business With God**

The teaching may well have focussed on issues which individuals could identify with, and in addition on many occasions the invitation to prayer ministry is widened to all who are hungry for God for example, for ministry in order that they may 'do business with God'. An illustration of this practice is a statement made by Mary Pytches on the New Wine website where she said, "I always say to people at the beginning of the week if you want to *do business with God* this week go up for ministry every time there's a call for ministry no matter whether it's for a pregnant woman and you're a man or its for a man and you're a woman just come up anyway. If you are *hungry for God* just keep on going forward for ministry".<sup>25</sup> The phrase 'doing business with God' is often used in New Wine and Wimber Vineyard but it is never defined and is ambiguous. Christians being continually 'hungry for God' would appear to be seen by the leaders as a good thing and they are exhorted to keep going up for ministry. The fact that this is for no identifiable purpose would create a dependency on continual ministry sessions, generate a situation where people consider themselves to be in constant need of 'something' but nothing specific, to be striving for more but that it does not seem particularly important to know what that need or 'more' might be. Individuals can keep on going to get ministry for this unspecified 'point of need'. If the responders do not know what their need is, or it is never identified, how

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<sup>25</sup> This is a video clip on the New Wine website ([www.new-wine.org](http://www.new-wine.org)) accessed on 16/04/2008.

would they know if it has been met? There is also a possibility that responding to the invitation to come for prayer ministry gains a general approval from the leaders, so the situation that may be in existence is a cyclical one of all parties affirming each other, the leaders obtaining a positive response to their preaching/teaching and subsequent invitation and as individuals come for ministry they receive affirmation and a 'blessing' from the platform at least.

Doing business with God; being hungry for God. Encouraging people to keep on coming back for more and more ministry creates a need and then the means for meeting it. One, perhaps rather cynical way of looking at this is that it keeps everyone in business. It can appear self indulgent because receiving ministry can put the prayer responder in a kind of mildly euphoric state, which of course does then wear off, so they come again for another 'touch from God'. Eleanor Mumford, in her seminar on Ministering in the Spirit: Why Ministry Matters at the Vineyard National Leaders Conference in January 2012 said concerning ministry time, when she and her husband John were with Wimber, "we couldn't get enough, we went to everything. We were addicted; it's extremely addictive" (E Mumford, 2012). I wonder whether addiction of a kind is a factor for the people here. Perhaps they do not actually resolve their issues and problems, but they can get to feel better with a regular dose of prayer ministry. This way of doing things does seem to be something that happens as the next quote signifies, "There were lots of us who were new converts, with 'stuff', sin, but I don't ever remember my small group leader facing us up with our stuff, we would just encounter Jesus week in week out and then just make changes, change just came naturally as we encountered God" (VineyardChurches, 2011). I am not

sure that not facing your difficult issues or 'stuff' and going for prayer ministry is the way to maturity.

Tomlinson commented that whilst 'shepherding' might no longer be operating as it did, nevertheless, elements of previous behaviours can still be observed in more current pastoral and leadership practice. One of the principal issues at stake is the fine line between care and control. He talked about elements that create vulnerability to a slippage from care to control, for example, one element would be the emphasis on ministering to people's perceived personal needs that can create patterns of dependency.

#### **4.2. Being Well All The Time**

It is also possible that Wimber Vineyard Christians have a feeling that they should be, and maybe have a right to be completely well and content all the time.

Whether that is what lies behind suggestions from the leaders that people access prayer ministry frequently. Maybe there are other reasons such as leaders needing to see signs of affirmation and success for themselves. People responding for prayer ministry would reassure them that there is 'fruit' from their ministry. Some of this thinking does come from earlier times in evangelicalism and I can remember myself the concept of happiness being sold as part of the Christian life and singing songs that contained words like 'and now I am happy all the day',<sup>26</sup> 'I am H A P P Y' and '...I'm as happy as can be, My cup's full and

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<sup>26</sup> Words: Isaac Watts, Hymns and Spiritual Songs, 1707; Ralph E. Hudson wrote the refrain in 1885.

running over'.<sup>27</sup> “Charismatics ...regularly assume that physical disorder and discomfort is not ordinarily God’s beneficent will for his children” (Packer, 1980b, p. 11). Packer explained that with paradigmatic appeal to healings by Jesus and the apostles, divine healing becomes a matter of high expectation. I have shown earlier, the gift of healing is sought in leaders by individuals and people flock to wherever those leaders are to partake in what is on offer.

## **5. The Practice Of Prayer Ministry**

### **5.1. The Five-Step Model – Overview**

At this point I will outline the practice of prayer ministry as conducted in Wimber Vineyard. Wimber produced a *Five-Step Model for Healing Ministry*, the most detailed version of which is contained within *Power Healing*. Shorter versions are also available (J. Wimber, undated), and an internet search finds numerous different versions on a variety of Vineyard church websites. The gist of the five steps remains much the same. I will summarise this model and explore it in more detail in the next chapter.

Step 1, The Interview, the purpose of which is to gather pertinent information using questions like “what do you want prayer for?” The interviewer should listen not only to the person, but to God for spiritual insights in the form of words of knowledge or insight or mental pictures. Step 2 is the Diagnostic Decision. ...“The symptoms of physical illness and mental disturbance are usually rooted in spiritual, emotional and relational causes that are not obvious at first”. Step 3 is

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<sup>27</sup> CSSM Chorus Book

Prayer Selection. "What kind of prayer is needed to help this person? ... This is to ask God how we should intercede for this person. "Simply pray a prayer regarding the person's need. For example: Dear Father, please heal Joe's headache". When praying against pain, the increase or decrease of the pain should be monitored as things that are observable and measureable should be aimed for. God may instruct that the condition be commanded to leave – thus prayers "may sound more authoritative". Step 4 is Prayer Engagement. "After laying on of hands – pray that the Holy Spirit will come and minister to the person". Determine how effective prayers are being – ask the person for any signs, ask the person if there is anything else and if God is speaking to them. Healing may be complete or partial/gradual. Or it may not have occurred at all. Diagnosis may be wrong. "It may be necessary to concede defeat for the moment". Step 5 is Post Prayer Direction. For confessed sin, avoid temptation. When the person has not been healed, a word of encouragement and an invitation to come again another time.

## **5.2. New Wine Prayer Ministry Guidelines**

Guidelines for prayer ministry have also been produced by New Wine.<sup>28</sup> These guidelines have a different flavour to them from the Five-Step Model. The New Wine ministry team guidelines indicate to team members that initially, where ministry has commenced from the platform, it is because God operates sovereignly and team members need to stand back and let God be God. Where the leadership issue a call for delegates to be open and receive the Holy Spirit,

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<sup>28</sup> New Wine Prayer Ministry Team guidelines available from [www.new-wine.org](http://www.new-wine.org) (accessed 16/04/2008 and 02/05/2010). Also appendix 3.

team members should just bless what God is doing in the responders. Where delegates are coming forward for specific prayer, then the guidelines suggest that team members should ask what their delegate is seeking from the Lord, the Holy Spirit should then be invited to come, lead and guide. "If you [team member] have a prophetic word or picture, pray into it or offer it..." (New-Wine). Alongside some very ambiguous language and in-house terminology such as encouraging the responder to "go on receiving" "bless what God is doing", "the Holy Spirit is on you", "pray into a prophetic word or picture", or "speak to the condition", there are also guidelines about keeping safe, same gender ministry, delegates retaining personal responsibility, warning about dependency, care needed when touching people, being aware of their own [prayer minister] issues, never telling anyone they have an evil spirit and that words, pictures and so on may be incorrect. So there is some awareness of areas where things could possibly go wrong in these guidelines, but there is an assumption that ministry team members will know when they are out of their depth, that they will know at what point they have reached their limits and need to call for help. Being aware of your own issues is easier said than done. A person who has low levels of self awareness would find it difficult to appreciate the impact of getting their own self and (to use a 'Wimber' word) "stuff" mixed up with that of the person they are praying for, especially when the situation is emotionally and spiritually charged. I can see that steps have been taken to address potential problems when engaging in prayer ministry in these guidelines such as, raising awareness that each person retains personal responsibility, not telling people that they have evil spirits and allowing the delegate to 'weigh' any prophetic word or picture offered. But on the other hand, the guidelines are couched in terminology which in my opinion is open to

interpretation and individuals would have to be very sure they understood what was meant by the expressions and catch phrases used. Where an in-house phrase is used, which does happen a lot, great care should be taken to ensure that the same meaning is clear to all. There is no evidence that I can find of an explanation of these terms, so what might 'be open', 'bless what God is doing', 'pray into it', 'go on receiving', 'the Holy Spirit is on you', and 'speak to the condition' mean? They could be understood in different ways. For me this is a problem. My training taught me to explore every 'catch phrase' a client may utter and doing so has been most beneficial for my clients and for me. An example of a phrase commonly used by many clients would be that they have 'dealt with' something. Exploring this phrase together has revealed different meanings and blind acceptance, assuming that the meaning I might have attributed to this phrase was the same as that of the client would have been detrimental to most clients. The use of catch phrases often denotes that no one actually knows what is happening unless some exploration is done. Wimber was a master of the catch phrase; he used many such as 'equipping the saints', 'everyone gets to play', 'kingdom ministry/people/theology', 'the now and the not yet', 'faith is spelt R I S K', 'naturally supernatural', 'I'm a fool for Jesus, whose fool are you?', 'doing the stuff' and many, many more which are still continually in use by Vineyard Christians. This was demonstrated on a promotional video clip posted on the Vineyard Churches website in 2011 (VineyardChurches, 2011) where many of these phrases were used. One part of this promotional video described the Vineyard worship and the Holy Spirit. "[Worship] goes to the heart. You see people melting as they worship, weeping or just waiting in the presence of the Lord...There is a sense of allowing that one-to-one connection with God...[You

can] receive healing or a touch from God...That element of drawing close to God, of that intimacy with God...unlock intimacy in people's hearts and allow people to come into that intimate relationship with Christ. You might see someone shaking or their eyelids fluttering, there might be a shine on their face. We are all the time trying to demystify what the Holy Spirit is doing so you can train people how to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit, how to follow His teaching and how to pursue what he is doing" (Appendix 3). Other phrases appear to have been added to the more original repertoire such as, the kingdom theology of the Vineyard movement is 'not pie in the sky when you die, but steak on your plate while you wait', and people need 'jobs and Jesus, food and faith'. This is not every day language in common usage by anyone outside of Vineyard Churches. It is difficult to know what would be understood by this summary of the video contents or actually what is meant by it anyway.

### **5.3. Prayer Ministry Interpersonal Dynamics**

Furthermore, this style of prayer ministry can appear mysterious involving deliverance from evil spirits, mental and emotional healing, prophecies, 'words of knowledge' and the responder being 'slain in the spirit', an experience described by Cartledge in the context of a New Wine gathering. "Individuals can be seen *doing business with God*' (italics mine) around the tent, some are standing, some are sitting, and some are kneeling. Others may be 'resting in the spirit' on the floor, or crying or indeed laughing" (Cartledge, 2006, p. 210). He also described how "members of the ministry team... pray for God to *meet them at their point of need*" (italics mine) (p. 210). So again there is little identifiable focus to the

prayer ministry. No one need know what the point of need actually is. Anything can happen. In fact the Prayer Ministry Team guidelines issued by New Wine instruct their team members to initially “stand back and allow God to be God. ...focus on the Lord and encourage the delegate to *go on receiving* ...just *blessing what God is doing*”. Neither the responder nor the prayer minister need assume any responsibility for what may or may not happen. This style can lead to the emergence of 'expert' prayer ministers who can attain status and power in this context. It is very difficult to challenge if no one knows what is supposed to be happening; questioning is not easy or straightforward. This style can lend itself to the danger of overstepping the mark for the so-called 'experts' or prayer ministers, as they can feel the need and expectation to deliver 'something' in the encounter which can be just as damaging for them as it can be for the responder.

The positive and spiritually charged atmosphere and sense of rightness and certainty that can surround these events make it difficult to express doubt or ask questions. Part of the style includes prefacing remarks a prayer minister might make with phrases such as 'what God is saying/doing' is, 'God would say to you', 'this is what God would have you do' and so on. If these emphatic statements were to include qualifications such as 'I think that, or 'could it be', or 'is it possible that', they can lose their appeal especially to the receiver of such statements who may be looking for direction without personal responsibility. In times of uncertainty, many are attracted to those who appear to have confidence and a sense of direction (Parker, 1997). I note that New Wine discourage team members from giving words or prophecies and insisting that they are direct from God.

Parker (1997), writing more specifically about healing ministries said that responders can be looking for a quick cure. Responders invest in the prayer minister who they feel may have a greater access to God (perhaps because they have been set apart as the experts). The weak one (responder) invests power and authority in one who they think can heal them or affect their healing. They can be needy for understanding. The temptation for the prayer minister is to play the Guru, using so-called 'words of knowledge' which often can be no more than hunches or opinions. There is often no procedure in place for checking 'words' that are given. They can be given from the prayer minister assuming that they will be accepted and acted upon (Parker, 1997).

Whilst the structures of shepherding may have faded in more recent times and certainly are not termed as such, the idea of the home group, local leadership and national leadership is still visible in charismatic evangelical circles including Wimber Vineyard. In past times willingness to submit in all aspects of life to the layers of leadership was seen as a sign of commitment and eligibility to be part of the church. Even now, non submission or resistance to leadership can result in fractured relationships and gradual exclusion from Vineyard church circles.

## **6. Leaders' Validation Of Ministry**

Models and styles of ministry can be adopted because such practices which can result in phenomena and manifestations such as, falling, laughing, crying, and other physical responses suggest there is more power around and can be

interpreted as a sign that God is at work and authenticating whatever is happening. More often than not the Bible verse in Isaiah which says “so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11) is used by leaders to validate not only what they say but they can also include validation of themselves in any observable response that occurs. It is in the public domain that as well as there being many honourable leaders and preachers, there also are some who are not, who abuse members of their families, those who come to them for help and those who support them, but who appear to have successful ministries (Howard, 1996), by which I mean that congregations appreciate their teaching and, if they are evangelists, people become Christians as a result of their preaching. The word and the preacher/leader become entwined and leaders can assume that they are a crucial part of “God’s Word not returning to Him empty” and they are therefore validated in whatever they do.

## **7. Conclusion**

Since the death of Wimber, nearly fifteen years ago in many ways little has changed in the way Wimber Vineyard operates. Wimber is quoted often and the way events, worship and prayer ministry happen have scarcely changed. The three main sections of an event or service, the way worship is structured to achieve the goal of intimacy with God and in Vineyard particularly, in prayer ministry, the use of the five-step model. Any changes and developments there are have come in the offshoot organisations such as New Wine where affiliated

churches retain their denominational structures and incorporate elements of Vineyard, usually worship and prayer ministry time into their programme. Both New Wine and Vineyard host their own national conferences, New Wine in the form of summer festivals and Vineyard in the form of conferences directed at specific groups for example, leaders, children's leaders, women, worship leaders. Vineyard have also hosted celebration days in different venues all over the country at the same time which have been video 'linked'.

Intimacy, encountering and connecting with God are the main goals. In order for this to happen, practices have become established, many started and inspired by Wimber. These practices create the possibility for misinterpretation of phenomena as signs are, almost indiscriminately taken to mean that God and the Holy Spirit are at work, generating disappointment and harm for some and good for others. An expectation has grown up in many Wimber Vineyard Christians that illness is not to be tolerated and that they should regularly encounter, be touched and blessed by God which results in the experience of a mildly euphoric state. It does seem that when this feeling is thought to be wearing off, top-ups are available as Christians are encouraged to go for more ministry. The next chapter explores prayer ministry and its adjunct practices such as words of knowledge and inner healing in more detail with a view to what the consequences might be for the people involved especially in the one-to-one encounter of prayer ministry.

## CHAPTER 5

### WIMBER VINEYARD PRAYER MINISTRY

#### Introduction

The previous chapter explained how much of the content of Wimber Vineyard services and events is effectively geared towards the goal of the ‘prayer ministry time’. I also briefly explored some of the issues surrounding the practice of prayer ministry. This chapter will examine the actual encounter and practices between a prayer minister and a prayer responder which occur within ‘prayer ministry time’, in two settings, Vineyard and New Wine together with the impact of the preacher/leaders participation.

#### 1. The Wimber Style Prayer Ministry Encounter

Wimber issued instructions regarding conducting a prayer ministry encounter and on the whole, these instructions provide the model for guidelines issued more recently by individual Vineyard churches and allied organisations such as New Wine. Wimber set out a Five-Step Model for Healing/Ministry,<sup>29</sup> a detailed version of which appeared in *Power Healing*, and because the shorter version remains in current use in Vineyard UK churches, for example, North London

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<sup>29</sup> There are several versions of this document available online, all slightly different in places and some undated, so difficult to determine the order of any revisions or if revisions were made by Wimber himself or others. This version is available from Vineyard Bible Institute>Wiki tab>downloads section>Vineyard Theological statements – url does not bring up correct page.

Vineyard, West Suffolk Vineyard, Network Vineyard (Reading) Wokingham Vineyard and Winchester Vineyard,<sup>30</sup> it is not inappropriate to discuss it now .

### **1.1. The Five-Step Model For Healing/Ministry – Step 1: The Interview**

Wimber stated that Step 1 was ‘the interview’, the purpose of which was for the prayer minister to gather pertinent information from the prayer responder. He suggested using questions like “what do you want prayer for?” Wimber said the interviewer (or prayer minister) should listen not only to the person, but to God for “spiritual insights in the form of words of knowledge, insight or mental pictures” (J. Wimber, undated). The prayer minister should gather information either from the responder or from God without getting into detailed medical or other information which Wimber suggested was not always helpful. Wimber acknowledged in the model, the value of intense listening (as I know from my own professional training, a skill not acquired overnight). He said “Listening builds, heals and encourages people in need toward deeper self disclosure through increased trust. Listeners must then be persons worthy of trust” (J. Wimber, undated). This is a helpful and insightful statement and in my experience intense or active listening does encourage the speaker to say more, but as I have said this kind of intense listening is effectively learned mostly with expert tuition and many hours of supervised practice. Many may perceive themselves to be good listeners, but do not hone the skill to a sufficient degree. It is possible that if prayer ministers were taught and practised appropriate listening skills, they would be more competent to ‘hear’ the deeper, perhaps unspoken disclosures which responders were

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<sup>30</sup> [www.northlondonvineyard.com](http://www.northlondonvineyard.com), [www.westsuffolkvineyard.co.uk](http://www.westsuffolkvineyard.co.uk) [www.networkvineyard.org.uk](http://www.networkvineyard.org.uk), [www.wokinghamvineyard.org](http://www.wokinghamvineyard.org), [www.winvin.org.uk](http://www.winvin.org.uk)

communicating to them. An issue for prayer ministers regarding learning these skills is that it could have the effect of appearing to de-spiritualise the encounter, but on the other hand, if all skills are given to us by God in the first place, learning to use them to their optimum is to honour those skills. Those who use and practise these skills then, I would suggest should acknowledge where they came from and not take over inappropriate ownership of them which would potentially leave God out of the equation.

Wimber continued in the model by saying that this first stage could be considered complete when the prayer minister either had a 'direction' to pray or they could pray according to the person's request and then see if they received additional information from God. It would seem to me that asking the responder what they wanted prayer for was not expected to elicit an appropriate or adequate response. In the ordinary course of events, this seems strange, but Wimber seemed to assume, from the way the instructions read that in most cases additional information would be required in the form of words of knowledge, spiritual insights or mental pictures and that the responder would not know enough about what had prompted them to respond. I have shown earlier that respondents were encouraged to keep coming forward for prayer in order to 'do business with God' without there being any apparent need for that person to know what the business might be about. It can often be the case that an initial need may not be the ultimate cause of a problem, but it seems strange to me to encourage responders to keep coming for prayer ministry having no awareness of what their need might be, an implication of this might be that they are *expecting* the prayer minister to discern something from God. I would also note

that responders who are familiar with Wimber Vineyard ways would expect their prayer minister to be coming up with additional information or words of knowledge as this is stated normal practice in this setting. This expectation surely puts both parties under significant pressure – the prayer minister to ‘get something’ and the prayer responder to accept and react positively. If the prayer minister indicated that their additional information was in the form of a word of knowledge, a prayer responder rejecting this in any way could appear like rejecting God. So a probable outcome might be that regardless of how the responder felt, they would most likely allow the process to continue.

## **1.2. Step 2: Diagnostic Decision**

Wimber called step 2 the Diagnostic Decision. As he rightly said in relation to this step, “most of those who pray for the sick are not trained to diagnose illness” (J. Wimber, undated) so ‘diagnostic decision’ in this context could appear to be an inappropriate title as diagnostics can often be concerned with medical practitioners and ill health. He also said in relation to this step, “The symptoms of physical illness and mental disturbance are usually rooted in spiritual, emotional and relational causes that are not obvious at first” (J. Wimber, undated). Limiting the causes of illness, both physical and mental to these three factors could have the effect of directing prayer ministers and responders along certain, possibly restricted routes in order to reach a solution. Looking for the cause of any physical or mental disturbance only in spiritual, emotional or relational ways leaves aside other possible valid causes for these problems. Whilst I agree that finding the appropriate cause of a condition is crucial to affect significant change,

to omit physical causes for whatever reason is surely inappropriate. Would Wimber's causes account for broken bones, illnesses where physiological breakdown is the cause, genetic disorders, accidents, injury, infections and so on? Yes, the causes Wimber suggested may possibly have rendered the person vulnerable to infection and other conditions but I would suggest that the causes he put forward are the only ones a prayer minister would actually be geared up to pray about and that was a possible reason why little else was considered. Wimber's observation also gave a strong indication of what he expected prayer responders to be coming for prayer ministry for. It is assumed by Wimber that problems would be related to physical and mental illness and disturbance, caused by spiritual, emotional or relationship difficulties only. I would suggest that generally people can only make sense of things from the knowledge they have available to them at the time. Indeed Middlemiss suggested that people interpret what they see in the light of what they believe (Middlemiss, 1996). A prayer minister is unlikely to be medically trained and so most likely to assess the responder in front of them in terms of what they have been taught and come to understand, that is, a spiritual, emotional or relational cause. In any event, assessing possible causes is a task requiring expertise and skill. Wimber seemed to be suggesting from the approach he put forward that words of knowledge could, and almost should, by-pass human knowledge and experience.

As I have explained, there are several versions of this five-step model available, some of which are more detailed. One that is part of a set of training materials from Vineyard Christian Fellowship, Anaheim and clearly based on the more basic version (Vineyard, 1998) does expand on what the causes of a problem

might be in relation to step 2: the diagnostic decision. This later version lists for example, physical causes: disease, injury, accident, which Wimber had not accounted for. Emotional causes: scarring or trauma. Unresolved sin: sinful activities and unforgiveness. A further possibility in this alternative version of the model for the cause of a problem and given the greatest share of space, is that of demonic activity. The causes of demonic activity in this version are described as unrepentant sin, previous sin, either self originated or the responder being a victim of trauma; incidents unknown to the conscious mind, a result of witchcraft – curses, vows and so on (Vineyard, 1998). I discuss demonic activity in more detail later in this chapter.

### **1.3. Step 3: Prayer Selection**

Wimber described step 3 as 'prayer selection'. "What kind of prayer is needed to help this person? ...This is to ask God how we should intercede for this person. Simply pray a prayer regarding the person's need. For example: Dear Father, please heal Joe's headache" (J. Wimber, undated). The alternative version of this model I have referred to instructed prayer ministers to pray in tongues when they did not know what else to pray (Vineyard, 1998). I am guessing that if there has been no change as a result of the initial prayer, then praying in tongues, where it would not be immediately obvious what the prayer was about would feel safer; no one would know if there had been an answer. Wimber added that prayers should be specific and that when praying against pain, the increase or decrease of the pain should be monitored as, according to Wimber 'pressing' for things that are observable and measurable should be aimed for. It is of note that

results and signs were important to Wimber in this model. The alternative document suggested looking for further visible effects of the Holy Spirit such as shaking, deep breathing, laughter, peace and so on. It continued that keeping watch for visible effects of other spiritual entities, which in this version were identified as physical contortions, choking, muscular tightening, unusual coughing, unnatural sleepiness, confusion and so on, should be undertaken (Vineyard, 1998). The prayer minister was encouraged to observe and monitor any results and ascertain how well the prayers were doing in terms of relief. Wimber said this in relation to praying against pain, and gave no other instruction regarding any of the other states he had mentioned previously in the model such as the physical illnesses and mental disturbance or the spiritual, emotional or relationship causes. Wimber seemed to assume that there would be measurable outcomes when praying regarding the spiritual, emotional or relational causes he mentioned. Results were important in this model to verify success. Wanting to be successful is important to anyone, so for the responder to confirm that they are in less pain for example, would have given positive confirmation to the prayer minister. In addition, Wimber said, God may instruct that the condition be commanded to leave – thus prayers “may sound more authoritative” (J. Wimber, undated). In many ways these instructions raise more questions than they address. Most people are not that simple to interact with, so prayer ministers are left to decide for themselves how to deal with situations which fall outside of those addressed in this model.

#### **1.4. Step 4. Prayer Engagement**

Step 4 is described by Wimber as Prayer Engagement. He said, “after laying on of hands – invite the Holy Spirit’s presence. Determine how effective prayers are being – ask the person for any signs such as heat or tingling which indicate the possible activity of God, ask the person if there is anything else and whether God is speaking to them” (J. Wimber, undated). This model gave importance and significance to signs such as heat, tingling, shaking and so on as it indicated, for them, confirmation that the Holy Spirit was at work on a person. Warrington, commenting on the phenomena accompanying ministry time said that although Wimber took these signs as accompanying what the Holy Spirit is doing, that “Such features are not recorded in the ministry of Jesus” (Warrington, 1999). In *Power Healing*, Wimber talked through his five steps to healing prayer in more detail. He said it was a procedure which he developed “through trial and error” and which he said, without further elaboration, was a reflection of how Jesus prayed for the sick (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 208). Even though Wimber said that Jesus taught his disciples to heal the sick using a show and tell method, Warrington pointed out that in fact Jesus “left no such methodological guidelines for his followers” (Warrington, 1999) and that this five-step model approach to prayer ministry and healing is not reflected in the ministry of Jesus. Wimber said that people responded to the power of the Holy Spirit in unpredictable and various ways – physical and emotional phenomena, as previously described being exhibited. He said that some of these manifestations could be reactions to sin either committed by the individual or sins committed against them. He further said that some of these manifestations were demonic and others indicated the

person experiencing the peace, grace and joy of God (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 222).

#### **1.4.1. Signs And Manifestations**

Wimber offered scriptural evidence for the more common signs or manifestations that could occur. The Biblical verses referring to trembling and shaking that he cited were all about incidents where people were actually afraid or terrified, for example, Gen 42:28 when Joseph's brothers found their money back in their grain sacks, they "lost heart and turned trembling to one another...". In Matthew and Luke the woman with the haemorrhage, on being discovered, trembled. The fact that humans can tremble is not in question. None of the examples given really replicate or substantiate the experience of shaking and so on that occurs often in prayer ministry time. Wimber gave falling over much the same treatment. There are biblical examples of people falling on their faces when in the presence of God or when in terror (Ezek 1:28, 3:23 – Ezekiel facing the glory of the Lord and Matt 28:4 – the soldiers at the tomb), but nothing that matches enough to the phenomena Wimber was referring to. He cited bodily writhing and distortions, laughing and sobbing and extended praise in the same manor referring to biblical verses that mention these behaviours, but the biblical contexts are different. So the biblical endorsement Wimber was probably attempting to give, in my opinion is not achieved. Wimber also discussed some of the concerns that have been expressed, for example the noise and apparent confusion that can accompany the manifestations. He quoted Jonathan Edward's comment on the matter, who discussing the manifestations surrounding the first great awakening said, "God

cannot be the author of it, because he is the God of order, not of confusion” (Edwards, 1834, p. 271). Wimber’s response was that whilst God is for order not confusion, the process of gaining order can be disorderly. But Edwards went on to say,

“But if God is pleased to convince the consciences of persons, so that they cannot avoid great outward manifestations, even to interrupting and breaking off those public means they were attending, I do not think this is confusion, or an unhappy interruption, any more than if a company should meet on the field to pray for rain, and should be broken off from their exercise by a plentiful shower. Would to God that all the public assemblies in the land were broken off from their public exercises with such confusion as this the next sabbath day!” (Edwards, 1834, p. 271).

Wimber was looking to Edwards for validation regarding some of the phenomena that he was discussing, but Edwards was speaking in the context of the 18th century New England revival where phenomena and manifestations abounded. The part of Edwards work that Wimber referred to is called *Marks of a Work of the True Spirit* and addressed the problem that just as in 1 John 4:1 “as the influences of the true Spirit abounded, so counterfeits did also abound: the devil was abundant in mimicking, both the ordinary and extraordinary influences of the Spirit of God, as is manifest by innumerable passages of the apostles’ writings” (Edwards, 1834, p. 260) and that rules and distinguishing true marks were needed in order to ‘judge’ the true from the false. I am no scholar of Edwards work but in essence he seemed to be trying to find a balance in what was occurring at the time. He did not refute the apparent excesses, just said they should be judged according to the rules which had been extrapolated from scripture. It is also clear from reading through this part of his work that the focus

of what was happening was the very many conversions; people being convicted and saved. In that context he said, “is it not reasonable to say that because of the “extraordinary degree” of the influence on a persons mind if they have an “extraordinary conviction of the dreadful nature of sin” and “an uncommon sense of the misery of a Christless condition” and so on “these things are no argument that the work is not of the Spirit of God” (Edwards, 1834, p. 261).

So the setting of Edwards writing, in the main is distinct from the Wimber Vineyard one because in Edwards time, conversions were mostly what was occurring and Wimber was addressing mostly Christians in seminar and workshop settings. Edwards acknowledged repeatedly from scripture the strong warnings of counterfeit, false prophets and so on and constructed rules and marks of judgement from scripture in order to discern the true from the false. The extremeness, strangeness or otherwise of what was happening was of little consequence to Edwards. He said,

“I do not know that we have any express mention in the New Testament of any person’s weeping, or groaning, or sighing through fear of hell, or a sense of God’s anger; but is there any body so foolish as from hence to argue, that in whomsoever these things appear, their convictions are not from the Spirit of God? And the reason why we do not argue thus, is, because these are easily accounted for, from what we know of the nature of man, and from what the Scripture informs us in general, concerning the nature of eternal things, and the nature of the convictions of God’s Spirit; so that there is no need that any thing should be said in particular concerning these external, circumstantial effects” (Edwards, 1834, p. 262).

To me, he seems to offer good measures of common sense along with the rules which are not so narrow as to have to account for occurrences by replications in scripture.

I have mentioned that Wimber said that some of the manifestations exhibited by those receiving prayer were demonic, “power encounters in the person between the kingdom of God (the Holy Spirit) and the kingdom of Satan (evil spirits)” (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 222). In Wimber’s discussion of the whole subject matter of manifestations he conceded that Satan could counterfeit Christian experience (p. 223). He drew on Jonathan Edwards who also was well aware that not all manifestations experienced were genuine and from God (Edwards, 1834). Wimber said that he had known of people who had no prior knowledge of these manifestations who began to experience them and so the only explanation could be that God’s power had touched them (p. 223). I would suggest that if such phenomena are being counterfeited, the counterfeit need not only be faking manifestations. Manifestations could be demonstrated in a human with no previous experience of such things. It is not clear why Wimber would consider that only replications of behaviours could be counterfeited. “But as the influences of the true Spirit abounded, so counterfeits did also abound: the devil was abundant in mimicking, both the ordinary and extraordinary influences of the Spirit of God, as is manifest by innumerable passages of the apostles’ writings” (Edwards, 1834, p. 260). Wimber also used this quote but does not seem to take it far enough in understanding what Edwards probably meant. Although Wimber accepted that not all experiences may be genuine, he had great difficulty in applying this to his own practice. It was as if he acknowledged the possibility that counterfeit could occur, that would be enough to stop it from happening around him.

Wimber also mentioned the more subtle phenomena such as eyelids fluttering and deep breathing which he said usually indicted the presence of the Holy Spirit, at which point Wimber said he would pray “More of your power, Lord. More!” As far as I can ascertain there is no indication from Scripture that anyone should issue a command or a prayer for more power, and Wimber offers no reason as to why he would do that or why anyone else should, but it is common practice in prayer ministry in Wimber Vineyard settings, as is the concept of ‘blessing’ what God is doing. Edwards also had something to say regarding the significance of bodily signs, “A work is not to be judged of by any effects on the bodies of men; such as tears, trembling, groans, loud outcries, agonies of body, or the failing of bodily strength. The influence persons are under, is not to be judged of one way or other, by such effects on the body; and the reason is, because the Scripture nowhere gives us any such rule” (Edwards, 1834, p. 261). Wimber did not attempt to validate these less dramatic signs from scripture, but made his own direct link and assumption between the signs and the affirmation of the Holy Spirit. He described the physical manifestations of the Holy Spirit in a person in order to help recognition of the presence of the Holy Spirit and because, when God’s healing power was seen to be on a prayer responder, “we are able to bless his presence and pray for more power. This is a fundamental principle for effective healing prayer, honour what the Lord is doing and usually he will do more” (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 232). It is unclear what ‘bless his presence or what the Lord is doing’ means or again, why anyone should engage in this activity. It could be perceived as arrogance. Affirming the actions of the Holy Spirit in this way is surely unnecessary as far as God and the Holy Spirit are concerned, but maybe these words are uttered by leaders as reassurance

because they feel qualified to identify what they perceive is happening. This could also have the effect of establishing their authority in the presence of congregations and responders. Assurances often come from leaders that those present should not be concerned about people falling, making strange noises or exhibiting unusual behaviours as these phenomena were signs that God was at work. Leaders then, were acting as agents and interpreters of what was going on, directing operations, which became another important consideration when it came to the significant implications surrounding the activity of both invoking the presence of the Holy Spirit and praying for more power. Does God not already know how much power is required and could this practice be about something else? The invocation for intensifying the power of the Holy Spirit, more often than not, resulted in a reaction from the people present who indicated by their behaviours and the level at which manifestations were exhibited that the prayer of the leader was being answered. This would then appear to set in motion a counter dependency effect where when the leader asked for more power, the people are almost programmed to up the evidence of the Spirit's presence by increasing the 'signs' they were exhibiting. So when Steven (1999) discussed this phenomenon, he suggested that uttering the prayer of invocation 'come Holy Spirit' could be fraught with some anxiety and tension for leaders who would need to be pretty sure that the Holy Spirit would indeed 'show up' and there would be the accompanying evidence. It is most difficult to know where God and the Holy Spirit are in all this, but maybe, because the use of these invocations and prayers which the people were used to hearing, the prayers in fact act as triggers which result in the desired behaviours which have come to represent the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. So there need only be minimal concern on the part of

leaders as the people have, on the whole learned how to respond when the words 'come Holy Spirit' are uttered and do so. As Steven pointed out though, there are problems here. What is it that makes leaders feel that they need to be in control of the presence and intensity of the Holy Spirit? Is the Holy Spirit operated like a dimmer light switch that is turned up at will and therefore subordinate to human control? Another pertinent issue brought out by Steven and Percy is that effectively free response of participants is undermined because they are reacting to a trigger (Percy, 1996a, Steven, 1999). As responders are, in addition, encouraged to be 'open', passive and not resist the Holy Spirit, their sense of personal responsibility in determining what happens to them is significantly diminished. Middlemiss suggested that for charismatic leaders worship should be open and that anything should be accepted no matter how strange. He called this 'the abandonment of reason' as rationale was discarded because nothing that occurred should be impeded or tested by intelligent, rational minds versed in the word of God (Middlemiss, 1996). As communications of the Spirit are on the whole mediated by the leaders and prayer ministers who are charged with getting the words of knowledge and so on, and there could be expectation from them concerning seeing a reaction in the prayer responder, which would have the effect of validating their ministry. Another concern for me is the notion that it seems that needs never seem to be fully met and congregations are continually striving for more and more experiences and supposed encounters with God and the Holy Spirit, but these experiences seem not to sustain responders for very long before they are back for more. Little difference appears to be observed as a result of these ministry experiences, and it is as though it could become a self indulgence as, because of the endorphin release the

experience mediated is often pleasurable and this ties in with the talk of intimacy which usually is also pleasurable and is, in addition a dominant discourse contained within this scenario.

I would suggest that there are many things that could cause a person to exhibit these 'signs' or behaviours very much like them, – being in shock for example, can result in a person shaking and trembling, tingling can occur after exercise or being anxious or excited, many people report experiencing tingling in their arms, hand and fingers if they are in a state of panic. The other signs that have been mentioned for example, eyelids fluttering, warm facial glow, deep breathing and sighing are all produced when there is an endorphin release in a human body which could be due to anticipation and sense of high expectation both of which are common in such Wimber Vineyard gatherings. A couple going on a first 'date' would easily produce a flush of excitement with the accompanying deep sighs, fluttering eyelids and so on. People can, in many settings work themselves into a state of excitement and appear to be in some kind of trance. While nursing in the Intensive Care Unit at my previous workplace, I have seen people when they are very upset and distressed, shake and tremble very noticeably and appear withdrawn and to not be in control of themselves. In Wimber Vineyard, this would possibly either be accounted for as the presence of the Holy Spirit on the person, or the Holy Spirit encountering evil spirits in the person and a power encounter ensuing (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 225). I am not suggesting that these signs never indicate the presence of God, but they can be accounted for in several different ways and the wise person involved in this ministry will, in my opinion, very carefully evaluate what is occurring and what it is that might be

signified in these situations. Being taught that there is only one explanation for what is being seen on these occasions can easily result in misinterpreting what is happening for the individuals involved. In prayer ministry time, prayer responders exhibiting these signs would always receive positive affirmation from prayer ministers and leaders and it would be commonly assumed by them, because they have been taught to look for these signs, that God and the Holy Spirit are present and working. People very quickly learn what is going to gain approval for them, and some of a responder's reactions could be accounted for this way, to obtain a positive response and affirmation. It could become a cyclical event in the encounter where, because the prayer responders are responding with the appropriate signs, the prayer ministers feel that what they are doing is proving to be effective and so the reactions can bounce back and forth between the two parties which would have the effect of affirming each other. This can produce more excitement and more expectation which results in more adrenaline and endorphins circulating in the bloodstream which generate feelings of pleasure, tingling, warm glow, heavy breathing and so on. As we are created by God, these physical reactions are also created by God, and should be accurately accounted for in order that God and the Holy Spirit are facilitated appropriately in a prayer responders life.

These behaviours or displays of phenomena and manifestations can be read as confirmation of healing power or God and the Holy Spirit being on people and so on. But this was not the case for David Watson, who when Wimber prayed for him experienced "the sensations and presence of the Holy Spirit that on similar occasions I had observed to occur in the bodies of those who were eventually

healed of cancer. He felt heat and tingling, what he described as ‘energy’ coming into his body” (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 14). But, as Benn and Burkill point out, the signs of healing were there, but David Watson was not healed (Benn and Burkill, 1987). Also, signs and wonders could be other things such as with Pharaoh and Aaron (Exodus 7:10-22), false prophets (Matt. 24:24) or Satan (2 Thess. 2:9). Wimber Vineyard Christians do tend to assume that every ‘sign’ signifies the presence and working of God and the Holy Spirit. Their leaders teach them this – in fact they believe that possessing and using this way of being is something that sets Wimber Vineyard apart. It makes Vineyard distinctive. They are treasures entrusted to Vineyard (from God) (E Mumford, 2012). I am suggesting that there is a possibility that many of these signs are reactions and responses human beings ordinarily display when they are in an emotionally and spiritually charged atmosphere, there is a charismatic leader, what to expect has been stated and the people want what is happening – so they are suggestible.

### **1.5. Step 5: Post Prayer Direction**

Step 5 is Post Prayer Direction. Again, this step is short in most versions of the instructions. Wimber said that for those who had confessed sin they should avoid temptation. When the person had not been healed, a word of encouragement and an invitation to come again another time should be given.

### 1.5.1. Healing Does Not Occur?

Wimber continued by explaining that healing may be complete or partial/gradual, or it may not have occurred at all. He suggested that if that was the case, diagnosis may be wrong or “it may be necessary to concede defeat for the moment” Packer points out that Jesus and the apostles healed with their word or their touch, that healing was then instant (once in two stages both instant). They healed in large numbers and there is no record of failure (except in Mark 9:17-29 when the disciples had not prayed) (Packer, 1980a, Section IV). Wimber elaborated further about these five steps in *Power Healing*, but even though there is much more detail surrounding the other steps, there is little more offered for the person who is not healed but that they should return another time or be directed to a kinship group (or house group). He did offer two contradictory reasons or thoughts regarding why some are not healed. He said that he always looked for faith when offering healing prayer. If he found none he said he would ask God for the faith and that he “would never blame the sick person for lack of faith if healing does not occur...I am rarely successful when that substance, that confidence of faith, is absent” (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 186). He had previously said, “There are many reasons why people are not healed when prayed for. Most of the reasons involve some form of sin and unbelief. Some people do not have faith in God for healing” (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 164). So, having said that he never blamed the person for lack of faith, it would seem that he could, in fact hold the responder responsible for unbelief and lack of faith to account for healing not occurring. In any event, I would question whether a person in need is required to have faith in order to affect their healing. Some

people Jesus healed undoubtedly did have much faith, for example the story of the woman with the haemorrhage (Matt. 9:21 and Mark 5:28) and the story of the two blind men (Matt. 9:28) who had faith for themselves. Luke 5:18 tells the story of the centurion's servant and Mark 2:2-5, the story of the paralytic let down through the roof, where others clearly had the faith for the healing of another. I also note that in this instance, Wimber attributed success to himself when he said "I am rarely successful when that substance, that confidence of faith, is absent" (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 186). The fact that Wimber claimed much for himself is borne out in my analysis in chapter 6. Maybe when the man, Wimber was in action, the faith of the responder was indeed essential, but when God is in action, clearly, it is not essential that the responder have the faith?

It is of concern to me that Wimber said, "The symptoms of physical illness and mental disturbance are usually rooted in spiritual, emotional and relational causes that are not obvious at first" (J. Wimber, undated, step 2), as though all conditions can be diagnosed and accounted for like this. Some conditions may be caused this way, but there is no accounting for the many other causes of human malfunction, only the causes that may possibly respond to ministry. The fact that there may be deep emotional and spiritual distress is alluded to but then the prayer minister is to pray against the pain and ask for signs from the responder about how things are going. Whilst there is a time to assess the effectiveness of interventions, the kind of approach being advocated here puts considerable onus on the responder to validate the prayers and 'do well'.

There can also be very distressing disappointment should healing not occur and Wimber's rather casual offering of a word of encouragement and come back next time could be crushing. Wimber did say that "God wants to heal the sick today. It is God's nature to heal people and he has called us to reflect his nature" (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 183). He went on to say that not everyone who was prayed over would be healed, and that scripture never qualified who will be healed, but that the task of the Christian was to pray and God was the one who healed (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 183). Packer felt that in this mind-set Christians could "spend their time in this fallen world feeling well and in a state of euphoria based on that fact" generated immaturity in Christians. Healing had become a matter for constant expectation for Christians (Packer, 1980b, part III). Not receiving healing "creates appalling possibilities of distress...when a person seeks healing, fails to find it" (Packer, 1980b, part III). My feeling is that this thinking can generate a superficial way of being which results in the view that questioning or exploring this mind set or having a higher sense of awareness can spoil or negate the work of God and the Holy Spirit with the consequence that those who feel this way fear any exploration and can vigorously defend their view.

## **2. Issues For Discussion**

In exploring this structure for personal prayer ministry, several assumptions were made by Wimber which were endorsed by those who supported him, Pytches for example. Wimber's assumptions were that words of knowledge were an essential part of prayer ministry, that certain 'signs' acted as endorsement of proceedings by God and reassurance of His presence. He further said, words of

knowledge could often reveal areas in a responders life where healing of past hurts or inner healing would be the chosen way forward. As inner healing proceeded, the problem may have been deemed to be caused by demons or evil spirits associated with the problem which required ministry and deliverance. I now explore these issues further.

## **2.1. Words Of Knowledge**

Wimber talked a lot about words of knowledge, usually giving anecdotal examples of words of knowledge given to him or others he knew. Without them, his ministry would not have been what it was as the way he described how he operated depended on them, so not much would have happened without them. In his earlier work, *Power Evangelism*, Wimber described words of knowledge in the context of their use in evangelism where a spirit-empowered presentation of the gospel was verified through the use of signs and wonders. He said, "Through these encounters people experience the presence and power of God. Usually this takes the form of words of knowledge...resistance to the gospel is overcome by the demonstration of God's power, and receptivity to Christ's claims is usually very high" (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 78). He related anecdotal examples of being in receipt of knowledge about another which he said could not be known except it be given through supernatural means. Wimber also coined the term 'divine appointment' in the context of evangelism where he described how one person was endowed with knowledge about a stranger which was then given to that person at a 'divinely arranged' meeting, the consequence of which was usually that they were converted. He said, "The Holy Spirit usually arranges

divine appointments at critical junctures in people's lives, times when they are struggling with problems or deep needs" (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 109). This would of course be Wimber's own testimony, his own life and marriage were in crisis at the time of his contact with the supernatural and his subsequent conversion. I would argue though, that someone who often related with people who are in difficult places in their lives, distress or preoccupation with serious difficulties is not difficult to 'see' or recognise, especially if those people involved would only be in each other's presence if they were in need of some kind. I would also argue that the nature of the difficulty resonates with or can be recognised by someone practised and sensitive to these things and this explanation could account for many of the incidents that are related by Wimber.

Initially, words of knowledge were used according to Wimber for evangelistic purposes. This developed as he started training, to the occurrences of receiving information by supernatural means regarding ailments, illnesses and conditions that afflicted those who had been attending his training seminars, conferences and so on being the focus. Wimber and his team members would impart this information in the form of words of knowledge which they expected individuals to respond to if they felt they had been singled out. He explained, "In scripture this is called a word of knowledge or a message of knowledge – 1 Cor. 12:8" (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 102). As I have shown, the prayer ministry procedure is virtually dependent on the prayer minister receiving words of knowledge. Further words of knowledge were expected in the more intimate setting of the prayer ministry time from the prayer ministers.

This was borne out by Pytches who concurred with Wimber and said words of knowledge were “the supernatural revelation of facts about a person or situation, which is not learned through the efforts of the natural mind, but is a fragment of knowledge freely given by God...” (D. Pytches, 1985, p. 99). Pytches gave a list of biblical references which he said were examples of the ‘word of knowledge’ in operation. Several concern Jesus and His knowledge of those He met. The most common example given as a proof text for the operation of words of knowledge through Jesus is John 4:18 ff, the story of the woman who had had five husbands. There are many other instances when Jesus knew more about what was happening than those around Him, but whilst Jesus was fully human, he was also fully God, (John, 1:1). It seems to me that Jesus had a distinctly superior connection to God than any other human being and to compare His abilities to those of others is inequitable. The story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:3 is also used as an example along with others from the old testament where acknowledged prophets were often the recipients of extraordinary knowledge (D. Pytches, 1985, ch 12).

#### **2.1.1. Two Schools Of Thought?**

As I have looked at words of knowledge as theologically as I am able, it appears that there are two main schools of thought regarding this subject. There is only one verse in 1 Cor. 12:8 which refers to this actual gift of a word or message of knowledge. As this verse also contains that of the gift of wisdom, the word or message of knowledge has very little space devoted to it in the Scriptures. The first school of thought regarding this gift of knowledge could refer to the wisdom

and knowledge required to meet the needs of the Christians in community – the body, in order to make wise and proper decisions and choices. In other New Testament references concerning knowledge, it seems to refer to the kind of knowledge that is learned, known and understood. There is no indication that this ‘knowledge’ as in 1 Cor. 12:8 is about the secret details of people’s personal lives and is to be supernaturally acquired.

Lewis, a social anthropologist who conducted studies at the conferences held in Sheffield in 1985 and in Harrogate in 1986, explored the concept of words of knowledge. He said they posed a problem for rational explanation. He attempted to explain the phenomena in terms of extra sensory perception, telepathy, spiritualism and analysed as many of those which were given at these conferences as he could for accuracy, specificity, probability and degrees of physical healing reported. Lewis suggested that the brevity of the biblical reference in I Cor. 12:8 to words or the message of knowledge would be because it would “appear that it was a commonplace or well understood spiritual gift about which no serious problems arose” (Lewis, 1989, p. 129), so no further explanation or discussion was deemed necessary by Paul. He did not consider that this gift referred to anything other than the giving of knowledge known only to God and so his discussion surrounds accuracy, any other plausible explanation, who might receive them and how, and whether accuracy related to physical healings. My impression of his study is that because of the huge range of ‘words’, the range of specificity of those words, the difficulty of matching ‘words’ with recipients and the very difficult issue of assessing the validity of healing as a result of a ‘word’ being

given, no firm conclusions were drawn. There is no doubt that Lewis undertook a large task and did an enormous amount of work on his study (Lewis, 1986, 1989).

The other school of thought is that which Wimber earlier referred to when he said that this knowledge was that which was unknown to the person to whom it was given and usually contained personal details about another, for example extra marital relationships, other personal sins and situations all for the purpose of evangelism. Later, it appeared as though the majority of words of knowledge concerned illnesses, sickness, medical conditions which were given at the start of ministry time in the context of Wimber style seminars, workshops and services. In *Come Holy Spirit*, Pytches went through how, in this context, he understood, this gift was exercised. He suggested that one may sense the truth about a problem or the whereabouts of something lost. There may be pictures or visions with words. The words may be heard “in the mind’s ear” (D. Pytches, 1985, p. 106). A corresponding pain may be felt. Heat or tingling may be felt in the minister’s hands signifying that they should lay hands on and pray for someone. He said that words of knowledge were faith builders. He also said that words of knowledge indicate the direction in which God is working and that words are given by God because He wants something done with them (D. Pytches, 1985, p. 106).

My observations either being at or watching these events were that the people who the words of knowledge were about already had this knowledge about themselves, they knew if they were sick and what their sickness was, even if it could only be described as a pain somewhere. Where words of knowledge were

given, the person had to recognise themselves and make themselves known (if the words were public) to receive prayer. Again, from my observations, those who come forward were seldom matched up with the corresponding word of knowledge, so one could wonder why those who were sick were not called out and healed? What would make God introduce another step into the healing process? As happened most of the time in the New Testament, either the sick came or were brought to Jesus and He healed them, or Jesus asked what was wrong or what they wanted and He healed them. Never were the crowd asked if there was anyone present with a bad back or a pain in their leg. And what of those who are just as sick, but there was no word of knowledge for them? What might the implications be for how they feel about their relationship with God? Had He not noticed that they are unwell? It is unlikely to be a faith builder for them. Why are others being 'singled out' (Wimber used this phrase often in the conferences) for attention, prayer and possible healing and not them?

James 5:14 says "Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord." There is no instruction for sick people to wait for a word of knowledge to secure their healing.

Another issue of concern regarding words of knowledge is that they can seem dangerously like the fortune telling kind of interaction that occurs in magic shows or sea front entertainment, where people come out from 'readings' saying there is no way that the magician/fortune teller could possibly have known such and such a thing about them. This phenomenon is very convincing for many. Just

because information gained by one person about another seems accurate, does not mean that it comes from God. Many who have no connection with God can achieve the same effect.

## **2.2. Inner Healing**

Wimber wrote about and made numerous references regarding inner healing (J Wimber and Springer, 1986). He stated that sickness could strike in a variety of places in a person and so healing also came that way in the corresponding areas. It is difficult to determine exactly what he meant by this, but he continued, the areas where sickness and therefore healing could occur were, in the spirit which was healing spiritual sickness caused by sin. Effects of past hurts was inner healing by the application of God's grace and forgiveness for hurtful memories and damaged emotions. With reference to the demonised and mentally ill, Wimber said, "Demonization is frequently incorrectly diagnosed as mental illness in western culture" (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 77). He described healing the body as healing where the structure of the body is damaged through accidents, infections and so on and also malfunctioning organs such as heart disease. "The dying and dead" involves comforting the dying "and – infrequently – raising the dead" (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 78).

Wimber majored on discussing overcoming the effects of past hurts. He related symptoms gleaned from the writings of others, for example, Francis MacNutt and Rita Bennett. In chapter 5 of *Power Healing*, Wimber basically asserted that damage in the emotions and memories often leads to physical problems and

sickness. He also said that distinction should be made between surface and root memories. Surface memories, those which the person can recall are easier to deal with than the root memories which are embedded in the unconscious mind so the person is unaware of them. “The Holy Spirit is capable of probing deeply into the unconscious mind and rooting out effects of past hurts that hold us back” (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 104). Wimber linked into this the topics of demonization and severe demonization which will be explored later in this chapter. However, Wimber further said that many traumatic events and sin acted as entry points to demons gaining a foothold in someone’s life. For instance, “people who have been sinned against sexually usually have serious demonic problems” (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 132).

### **2.2.1. Controversy**

There is controversy surrounding the subject and practise of ‘inner healing’. Some of those on whom Wimber drew to gain his understanding of the area, for example Dennis and Rita Bennett, Fr. Michael Scanlan, Leanne Payne, John and Paula Sandford and Francis MacNutt drew their ideas from Agnes Sanford, often referred to as the mother of inner healing (Gumprecht, 1997). Wimber further stated that whilst he had learned a lot from these various writers, “a far greater contribution came from scripture study and experience” (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 293).

In *Power Healing*, Wimber wrote about the healing of past hurts or inner healing, quoting frequently from the aforementioned authors and using anecdotes. The

assertion from him was that damaged and unhealed emotions and memories, often as yet unrecalled, resulted in continuing and seemingly irresolvable issues in a Christian person's life. These could range from the results of being born into a sinful world, genetic conditions, accidents at birth and poverty for example, to wounds inflicted by others, abusive parents, actions committed against another, or things that should have been done but were not, for example, protecting a defenceless child, nurturing or making adequate provision for children. Lastly, there were the results of personal sin, poor choices with the attendant feelings of guilt and shame. It is not unusual that many are unable to recall or face the intense pain resulting from life's traumas that they carry with them. Wimber explained that in this form of inner healing, the Holy Spirit would be invoked and asked to bring to light the issues causing the problem. The practices commonly used by those he mentioned included "words of knowledge, counselling, faith imagination and role playing in the healing process" (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 293). Some of the practices that have been involved are called 'reliving the scene with Jesus', where the person is asked to visualise the traumatic event and then as it peaks, imagine Jesus coming into the scenario using techniques like guided imagery or suggestion and see what He does in that scene (Bennett, 1982). According to Bennett this has the effect of changing the history of the memory – the content of what actually happened and so allows the person to change the way they feel and to bring forgiveness and so on. A further variant is having asked the Holy Spirit to raise the memories, to then imagine what Jesus would have said and this would result in the person feeling healed. Also, for Wimber, traumatic events are said to open entry points for demons, so the ministry involved is to cast out the demon/s. Wimber devoted many pages in

*Power Healing* to this subject and the anecdotal stories that he used to substantiate the points he was making. He said “[God] does reframe memories so they are no longer significant factors in how we think, feel or act” (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 102).

There are problems with this form of facilitating people dealing with persistent problems and issues. I would suggest that while the prayer minister would assume charge of a prayer ministry situation, the prayer responder would have little need to take personal responsibility for their memories, subconscious or otherwise. No matter what has happened to a person in life, which of course could involve being sinned against traumatically, that sin is the responsibility of the perpetrator/s. The person as an adult, cannot ‘blame’ the perpetrator/s for their problems and resulting behaviours thinking that their past is the cause for all their problems and they therefore need not own any responsibility for them in the present. This can occur when abuse seems to be passed from generation to generation; the next generation abuses because they were abused. Being sinned against may not be the only issue, poor choices and personal sin may also need consideration. Wimber would most often, according to the information in *Power Healing* see that demons would have entered because of the trauma and so deliverance is how this would be addressed. He would do this by asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to the prayer minister or the responder, memories from the past which have been subconscious, that are not easily available for normal recall. This is fraught with difficulty. There is no guarantee that what might be revealed is based in reality no matter who it is revealed to. The responder, if they have no actual recollection of an event is dependent on being able to react to this

abstract revelation, hoping that it has some basis in fact and that what they are engaging in will improve things for them. To clarify what is actually being suggested, I quote from Bennett who said, "As you pray, Jesus brings back to you what it is He wants to heal....visualise the scene as clearly as you can. ...revisualising the scene clearly from your memory will put you in touch with your feelings, so that you can let Jesus heal them. ...As you go through the scene a second time, you know Jesus is with you. He was there all the time.... (Bennett, 1982, p. 77-78). There are in my opinion significant problems with this practice. Not only are responders dependent on what their minds and memories yield, but Bennett said that Jesus was there in the middle of the trauma all the time. Far from being comforting, it could legitimately be asked why Jesus would just watch and do nothing at the time and why would He need a second time to be in the memory when it is supposedly changed. The forgiveness would then take place, but in the changed memory, not the real one, so the forgiveness is not related to what actually occurred but the new, revisualised memory. Bennett told many stories in *Emotionally Free* where, for example an unwanted baby was picked up by Jesus or He spoke to a bully. The responder is left with a distorted sanctified/sanitised memory. This is a bit like rationalising a situation in an attempt to make it easier. For example, unemotional, unaffectionate parents were probably so because their own parents were either absent or also unemotional. Thinking this way does not resolve the issue. I would suggest also that there is significant pressure on both parties in a prayer ministry situation to 'get something', for the prayer minister to feel that they are helping in some way and the responder that they are not letting either themselves, the prayer minister or God down in this situation, should nothing happen. When responders are

asked to visualise scenes either according to suggestion or by guided imagery, any visualisations that occur are dependent on the impressions in the imagination, and again, there is no guarantee that what is being seen in the mind's eye is inspired by God and is any more than imaginary. In a spiritually heightened atmosphere it is all too easy to believe that what is happening is God inspired, but also just as easy to be mistaken. I have no doubt that unresolved traumatic events in a person's past can have a profound effect on the rest of their lives, just as healthy and wholesome events can. For Christians looking to resolve troublesome issues, where memories are easily recalled, then they can be resolved as memories in the present as the person becomes aware of and takes responsibility for their responses and reactions and appropriates the work of the Gospel in their lives, usually through the act of forgiveness. This sounds easy and fairly straightforward, but making sense of feelings and memories, facing and resolving the effects of traumatic events from the past can be painful and tough to say the least.

Christians attended events like those which were arranged by Wimber, not always thinking that they could or would agree with what was happening, but almost certainly not feeling that they were in any danger and that anything unsafe would occur. An implication of feeling safe is that people can let their guard down. They are not even looking for or conscious of any potential problem and so when a congregation or delegates are encouraged by the warm and amiable leaders to just go with whatever is happening, 'be open' and 'just receive', everyone can have this power and operate in these supernatural gifts, there is, in my opinion significant potential for things to go wrong for individuals. Percy,

speaking in the context of the Toronto Blessing said that this kind of talk from leaders delivers power into their hands and they then become “power brokers”, the main agents or interpreters of manifestations. Although the leaders intimate that they are sharing their power, in Wimber’s words “Everyone gets to play”, there will never be equality. Percy said, “[Those] wishing to receive must ‘let go of themselves’. ... In short, to receive anything, mostly everything in the cogitative-rational sphere has to be given up, including critical faculties. We have already noted the accompanying rhetoric, ‘don’t rationalise – just let go’” (Percy, 1996a, p. 46). Wimber said things in a similar vein, “Sometimes God offends our minds in order to reveal our hearts” (J Wimber, 1989) and “God is greater than His word” (J Wimber, 1981), so making judgements about what is really occurring certainly in terms of scripture is not possible.

### **2.3. Demons**

In *Power Healing* (1986) Wimber gave some considerable space to prayer for the demonised as part of the five-step model. In this context I turn now to a discussion of demons as Wimber gave the presence and influence of evil and demons a high profile in his work and practice. My earlier exploration of Wimber’s theology showed how he drew upon Ladd and the theology of spiritual warfare; the now and the not yet; the kingdom of God versus the kingdom of evil. “The third Wavers often claim that George Ladd’s kingdom theology is their theological basis” (Ma, 1997, p. 195). The concept of the kingdom of God was reinforced by the fact that there was an arch enemy engaged in various forms of warfare against it. Percy said, “For Wimber, this Kingdom [of God] is one that is

set up in opposition to the rule of Satan” (Percy, 1996b, p. 86). It is in this context that the concept of issues relating to demons and demonisation are set.

Wimber’s theology of spiritual warfare lends itself to allowing for personal battles between Satan and individuals. The enemy – often just called that, but also named as Satan or the devil is the figurehead of the warfare waged against the kingdom of God and the people belonging to it. Wimber spoke about the times when the Holy Spirit and evil spirits encounter one another in a prayer responder and manifestations occurred (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 222). For Wimber there was clearly no doubt that people could be demonised (p. 240). He explained in some detail how he diagnosed the presence of a demon/s and how prayer for the severely demonised was best done with a team of two to five people. In these cases, one team member should be the leader, and one sometimes to record what happened, making a note of the demons’ function and relationships to make sure that, at the conclusion all the demons had gone. This method of setting a number of people aside and creating a special occasion for this ministry sent lots of unspoken messages to all involved and would only have served to heighten the atmosphere of expectation that something so big was likely to happen that needed several people to deal with it. Also, the responder was outnumbered by the size of the team and would be aware that something of a dramatic or theatrical nature would take place. For Wimber the critical point of diagnosis was actually speaking to a demon and then asking it’s/their name/s. He described interactions with demons which involved him talking with them, then silencing them and casting them out (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 242). The descriptions were pretty dramatic and included responders falling to the ground, crying out, shrieking, deep breathing, the use of unknown languages, foul odours,

foul smelling excretions, animal noises, slithering like snakes, arguing with demons and so on. As before with biblical validation of the signs of the Spirit, Wimber likened some of these symptoms associated with demons to verses in scripture, for example, Mark 5:1-5 (Legion) and Mark 9:29 (the boy with the spirit). Again, as before, the scriptural links are tenuous at best and do not really correspond to what he appeared to be trying to verify. Once Wimber was satisfied that all the demons were gone, he said he made sure that the demons could not return. He ensured that the responder had a relationship with Christ and if not preached the gospel to them and prayed that they received Christ. He then led them to renounce any involvement in the occult and also engaged in inner healing and the renouncing of sin. Then he prayed that the responder was filled with the Holy Spirit.

We saw previously the influence of Ladd on Wimber, and also how Kraft influenced his thinking on worldviews. We now can see a reverse influence between Wimber and Kraft. Kraft is professor of Anthropology and Intercultural Communication at Fuller Seminary. He and his wife Marguerite (Meg) had been missionaries in Nigeria. Charles Kraft attended the MC 510 classes run by Wimber and Wagner at Fuller and from there developed his theology and practices regarding demonology. He related,

“A new phase of my life started with the start of that course in January 1982. I began to see what it is like to assume that Jesus meant it when he said, “... whoever believes in me will do what I do ...” (Jn 14:12). We saw many people healed before our very eyes because Wimber and his ministry team members asserted the authority of Jesus over whatever problems people came with. And in due course I and others began to claim the same authority and to experience similar results.

Now, fifteen years later, I have found meaning, excitement and spiritual enrichment beyond measure as I work in Jesus' authority to bring freedom to those who are hurting. Though the class Wimber taught focused on physical healing, I soon discovered that God has gifted me in dealing with the deeper emotional and spiritual areas that often underlie the physical problems. So, for the past twelve years, I have been involved in what I call deep-level or inner healing. This ministry, then, frequently brings me face to face with demons. Probably at least half of the thousand or more ministry sessions I have led have involved demons" (Kraft, 1997, pp. 13-14).

Kraft founded and was president (now retired) of Deep Healing Ministries but still conducts seminars on deep level healing, deliverance and spiritual warfare. He has also written books on the subject; *Defeating Dark Angels: Breaking Demonic Oppression in the Believer's Life* (Kraft, 1992), *The Rules of Engagement: Understanding the Principles that Govern the Spiritual Battle in Our Lives* (Kraft, 2005) among many other books. His methods concerning conducting deep level healing and spiritual warfare which he had established and about which he also conducts seminars and teaches include speaking to groups of demons said (by him) to be present in a person, forbidding them to get help from other demons, forbidding violence, throwing up and other spectacular behaviour, in order to weaken them before he casts them out (Kraft, 2006a). Kraft acknowledged that there was a question regarding whether demons could live in Christians. He said that the term demon possession meant no more than having a demon and the term demonised was preferable to refer to demons living inside a person. "We all wish that Christians were impervious to demonic inhabitation but experience does not allow such a belief" (Kraft, 2006b, p. 33). He claimed to know of over 2000 cases in his own experience of Christians inhabited by demons. He gave several examples of talking with and to demons (pp. 34, 35, 36, 39, 43 and 44) and what can occur when they are being cast out. There was a significant element of the

dramatic when he spoke against any emissaries of the evil one present and forbade “any activity by any satanic beings except what I specifically command”. Next he would claim protection, “I claim protection in the name of Jesus Christ for each one of us, our families, our friends, our property, our finances, our health and everything else that pertains to us from any revenge or other dirty tricks from the Enemy” (Kraft, 2006a, p. 43). He followed that with, “In the name of Jesus, I cut off any spirits inside this person from any help they might get from outside spirits or from any others inside the person. I forbid any spirits inside this person to cause any violence, any throwing up or other showy behaviour” (Kraft, 2006a, p. 44). A quote from Prayer Ministries Network website regarding Kraft’s ministry says they had previously been taught “not to do deliverance like Dr Kraft because he talks to demons and they will always lie to you” but subsequently took part in a healing session in which demons manifested and were quietly and efficiently dealt with. “From then on we enthusiastically embraced this approach and have had great success with it” (PrayerMinistriesNetwork). From the descriptions, Kraft could be more dramatic than Wimber, but the similarities in practice are evident. This is an example of ‘it works so we do it’ and the assumption that any activity where God is deemed to be involved and thought to be successful must be good and instigated by God. Ma asked whether Kraft’s approach was a set of ‘how-to’s’ and suggested that even if his approach worked but failed to receive scriptural approval or even contradicted biblical teaching, “one must be courageous enough to abandon it. The dilemma is that many assumptions and methods of the Third Wave are employing work and work well in many cases, but many of them are equally questionable from a biblical and theological standpoint” (Ma, 1997, p. 200). There is no account taken of the fact that many things work

or are effective but they are not either necessarily good nor do they have anything to do with God. This style of ministry is criticised by those who deny that Christians can be demonised and also by those who would take issue with his way of dealing with people (Grimsley and Miller, 1993).

### **2.3.1 Can Christians Have Demons?**

For many, there is a serious debate regarding whether and how, people and or Christians can be demonised or demon possessed. For some, the debate is around the meanings given to the words used and semantics. Demonised, demon possessed, oppressed, infested are terms commonly heard. Also to be considered is whether it makes any difference regarding demonization if an individual is a born again Christian or not. Grimsley and Miller (1993) agree there is a debate, in their article 'can a Christian have a demon?' They consider two views, one is that a Christian cannot be demon possessed but rather they can have demons reside and exercise control within them, the solution to which state is to cast the demon/s out. The other view considered is that Christians cannot be inhabited by demons since they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, however, they may be 'oppressed' from the outside and resistance is the most apt and scriptural way of addressing this situation.

Those who hold the first view prefer the term demonization rather than demon possession because although they believe that demons can inhabit believers, Satan cannot own them. Grimsley and Miller suggest that it is all about the location of the demon in relation to the believer – are the demons controlling from

within or without? And, if they are controlling anyone, who, that is those who are not born again or those who are? Grimsley and Miller further point out in their helpful article, that there is no mention of possessed or demonised Christians in the New Testament and there is no instruction on exorcism (casting demons out) as such, especially for Christians. There is plenty of teaching on spiritual warfare and spiritual attack, but the solution for this situation is resistance, as for example in James 4:7 “Resist the devil and he will flee from you”. The casting out of demons is reserved for non believers who can be demon possessed and there are examples of this in scripture, Luke 8:27 ff – Legion and Mark 7:25 ff the Syro-Phoenician woman’s daughter. There are those like Kraft and Dickason (1987) (Kraft used Dickason’s writings to support his own), who say that their experience of apparently genuine Christians manifesting the symptoms of demonization persuade them that Christians can have demons. Because it appeared that scripture is effectively silent on the matter of exorcising demons from Christians, Grimsley and Miller suggest that Dickason (1987) assumed that because scripture is neutral so the apparent experiential evidence became elevated to the stature of Biblical truth and was taught as a doctrine which was based on experience. They see basing doctrine on experience as a problem. They went on to qualify the previously mentioned statement regarding the apparent silence of scripture, that the Bible is not exactly silent on the matter, resistance is the solution (Grimsley and Miller, 1993). I would suggest that Kraft and Wimber might have really seen resistance as the poor relation as a solution to the issue demons as there is no drama or exorcism involved. This would be a difficult view for those who have created a niche market for themselves, who effectively earn

their living and have significant reputations built on the practice of deliverance ministry.

### **2.3.2 Attributing Meaning To Experiences**

But what of the experiences of Kraft, Dickason and Wimber? Undoubtedly, the events really took place, but interpretation, and therefore the method of pastoral care is questionable. Grimsley and Miller suggest firstly that psychological reaction and the power of suggestion would produce the phenomena and manifestations observed. Many people are not familiar with how their minds and bodies could react in various situations. When they attend meetings on the subject of for example Kraft's Deep Level Healing, they would find themselves in an intense, heightened atmosphere in which they would have come to expect 'things' to happen that they knew they would not really understand, and at which the leader authoritatively taught about demonization and told anecdotes regarding their previous experiences of needing to operate deliverance ministry. Sometimes delegates may start exhibiting phenomena or manifestations, and this can become convincing for many present who can easily become caught up in the atmosphere created, relating what they have heard and seen to themselves (Grimsley and Miller, 1993). So again, these so called phenomena do not exclusively occur in Christian settings. Giving the impression that they do implies that these reactions can be attributed only to either God or Satan and any other (human) means of accounting for what has happened would be ignored.

In addition, Grimsley and Miller suggested that casting demons out from Christians could be a deception from the devil. "Clearly, the Devil would like us to believe he has more power over us than he actually does" (Grimsley and Miller, 1993). In addition they suggested that Christians who resort to deliverance sessions, in effect grant the devil a degree of control by default. They also suggested as a possible explanation for manifestations may be that the person appeared to be a born again Christian but actually was not a true believer and as only God knows for sure who is His, it can be impossible for humans to determine what the truth of the situation might be. Grimsley and Miller also talked about counterfeit. "It is true that there are satanic counterfeits to divine, spiritual power (2 Thess. 2:9). The need, then, is to test the spirits (1 John 4:1-3), the moral character of those purporting to have spiritual gifts (Matt. 7:22-23), and all teaching within the church by the Bible (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:16-4:5); not to deny the possibility of legitimate manifestations of God's presence and power" (Grimsley and Miller, 1993).

Grimsley and Miller also told us, as an explanation for Wimber's beliefs and practice that Jack Deere, who had been chief theologian for the Vineyard Christian Fellowship said, "Jesus dwells with sin anytime he inhabits the heart of a new believer. If he can dwell in a sinful person why couldn't he dwell in a demonized person?" (Deere, 1992, Grimsley and Miller, 1993). If this was the theological understanding in Wimber Vineyard, then licence was given for practice to take place on the basis that the enemy can reside alongside God indwelling His people. Grimsley and Miller said that this argument does not recognise that redeemed persons have evil, that is 'the flesh' within them, but

also they are new creations. The Holy Spirit who now inhabited them ultimately enabled them to triumph over their fleshly evil. This fleshly evil often consisted of sins such as lust, anger, pride and so on which believers are instructed in scripture to put aside and resist (Col 2:8). Those who think that Christians may be demonised see these sins as 'spirits' of lust, anger, pride and so on, thus rendering unnecessary an individual's personal and moral responsibility to deal with these issues themselves and who then, will often try and find a deliverance ministry that will be able to 'cast the problem sin out'. As Gal 5:16 and Rom. 8:9 indicate, if Christians live by the Spirit and do not gratify the desires of the flesh, they can be controlled by the Spirit if the Spirit of God lives in them.

There are of course those people who would testify to the success of deliverance ministry. Grimsley and Miller suggest that because their understanding was that they turned to Jesus for their healing, they may have thought or assumed that they were also delivered of demons that were the cause of their difficulty. Often though, the effect of this healing could be temporary, and can further result in a dependency on deliverance ministry or a need to continuously be asking for and needing prayer for the same issues. I have shown previously how in some settings, Christians are encouraged to keep coming for more prayer and I certainly have spent time with many Christians who cannot seem to get free from certain problems even though they have been involved with deliverance ministry and repeatedly prayed for. Living like this can be a heavy burden for Christians to bear and it can also seem very disappointing as Christianity promises so much more than continually struggling with the same troublesome issues. Collins suggested that the many claims made regarding the benefits of the experience of

the 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit' which now with hindsight appear exaggerated and have left charismatic Christians discouraged, the first flush of excitement having faded. This resulted in charismatics ready to embrace deliverance as a step that would bring them closer to "the promised land of personal shalom". He further says that the "idealism of the charismatic movement was a key component in its vulnerability to novelty. In establishing unrealistic expectations among its adherents it left them forever hankering after a final, decisive pneumatic experience" (Collins, 2011, p. 96). This could well be an important factor in the coming for more prayer ministry concept I discuss in other parts of my thesis.

In the following chapter I analyse my data and explain the methodology I chose to use in order to do this.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **THE FINAL ANALYSIS: MAKING SENSE OF THE SELECTED COMPETING DISCOURSES**

#### **PART I – METHODOLOGY AND DATA**

##### **Introduction**

I have said throughout my thesis that the Wimber Vineyard tradition can be recognised by its own language and rhetoric, an implication of which is that Wimber Vineyard remains distinct. The rhetoric employed was in most cases initiated by Wimber who came up with many catchphrases which were readily taken up by his followers. These have been sustained to this day and as I have studied the Wimber Vineyard movement, I have observed from the services and events that I have both listened to in podcast form, for example, (E Mumford, 2012, VineyardChurches, 2011, 2012) and attended that at Wimber Vineyard events it is rare for Wimber or something that he said not to be mentioned or featured in the preaching, teaching or ministry at some stage. A recent example is to be found in Appendix 2 where the Smiths explicitly mention Wimber's five-step model and use a variety of his sayings throughout their seminar, for example 'come Holy Spirit', 'doing the stuff', 'naturally supernatural', 'faith is spelt R I S K' and 'don't get religious'.

Experiences are also a significant characteristic of Wimber Vineyard.

Experiencing the work of the Holy Spirit on a continual basis as adherents go for ministry is a particular feature. To examine the phenomenon thoroughly, I needed to find a methodology for analysing the language, rhetoric and portrayal of experiences together with the impact and consequences for all individuals involved.

Because rhetoric, language and experiences are features which identify this group, it made sense to me to use a language-based methodology to analyse my data. Using this kind of method will not only facilitate the discovery and identity of what may be 'between the lines' but also permit me to explore the implications and impact on the adherents, be they leaders, those in positions of responsibility or congregation members. I have therefore chosen to use discourse analysis in order to achieve this set of goals.

Discourse analysis is a research tool associated with social construction (McLeod, 2001). Social construction is a theoretical orientation that underpins alternative (that is, qualitative as opposed to quantitative) approaches to the study of behaviour. Quantitative research methods are undergirded by "a positivistic conception of science ... where the discovery of laws governing the relationship between causes and effects is paramount" (Bannister et al., 1994, p. 4). As an alternative, qualitative research methods are defined as "the interpretative study of a specified issue or problem in which the researcher is central to the sense that is made" (Bannister et al., 1994, p. 2). Within this qualitative framework sits the approach of social construction, which "sees

science as a form of knowledge which creates as well as describes the world" (Bannister et al., 1994, p. 9). Social construction also wants "to emphasise the crucial role of the social context in giving rise [in this case] to religious experiences (Watts, 2002, p. 90). In addition this method takes a "critical stance towards taken for granted knowledge" (Burr, 1995, p. 3) and towards the idea that observations of the world easily yield their nature to us.

## **1. Social Construction And Discourses**

Social construction has certain links methodologically to deconstruction, and specifically "attempts to take apart texts and see how they are constructed in such a way as to present particular images of people and their actions" (Burr, 1995, p. 166). Social construction acknowledges historical and cultural specificity; our ways of understanding are specific to particular cultures and historical periods and are products of that culture and history. Our knowledge of the world, rather than being derived from the nature of the world, is said to be constructed between people; through interactions during the course of life, versions of knowledge are fabricated. Language interactions are of interest to social constructionists (Burr, 1995). So "our current accepted way of understanding the world is a product not of objective observation of the world but of the social processes and interactions in which people are constantly engaged with each other" (Burr, 1995, p. 4). Social constructions can be varied and are made up from 'discourses' which are described as a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events, a way of representing things in a certain light.

Discourses are an interrelated system of statements which cohere around common meanings and values, that are a product of social factors, of powers and practices (Hollway, 1984). "It is a broad concept referring to ways of constituting meaning which are specific to particular groups, cultures and historic periods" (Gavey, 1992, p. 326). Discourses vary in terms of the power they offer individuals (Widdecombe, 1995). So there can be a variety of discourses, each with a different story to tell about the same 'object', which strive to represent or construct the story in a different way. For example, an individual can be seen in different ways depending, perhaps, with whom they are interacting. When a person is with their workmates or colleagues they can be seen and perceive themselves very differently from when they are with their family, parents or socialising with friends. The individual is the same person, but each version of them, a product of their relationship with others, is socially constructed from the encounters that make up the relationships. An impact of this is that individuals can position themselves and others, either knowingly or unknowingly in order to achieve something. "People do things with their discourse; they make accusations, ask questions, justify their conduct and so on...which may not have been formulated or even understood by the speaker or writer" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p. 169). Discourses "that form identity have implications for what we can do and what we should do" (Burr, 1995, 54). Discourses offer 'subject positions' for individuals to take up (Hollway, 1984, Weedon, 1987). "It is a broad concept referring to ways of constituting meaning which are specific to particular groups, cultures and historic periods ... Within any discourse, subject positions are available to the individual" (Gavey, 1989, p. 326). Gavey went on to explain that subject positions offer ways of understanding ourselves and ways of

being and behaving. She continued that these 'positions' and discourses vary in terms of the power and authority they offer. "Identity and subjectivity are said to be constituted through a person's positions in different discourses" (Widdecombe, 1995, p. 107). More than being abstract ideas, discourses "are intimately connected to the way society is organised and run" (Burr, 1995, p. 54). For example, dominant, prevailing discourses often construct women as nurturing, caring, emotional and vulnerable. It does not take much imagination to see that a function and consequence of this construction could be that women make the best child carers and that this is 'natural' for them, whereas it would be 'unnatural' for them to be executives in business. Families can be constructed as contained and sustained units having fathers who work and provide and mothers who cook and care for children. Being single, divorced, childless, same sex pairs, cohabiting or any other variation could then be seen as a deviation from this construction. So discourses have a role in the construction and maintenance of social life. Some versions or constructions appear as 'truth' or 'normal'.

### **1.1. The Stamp Of Truth**

There are discourses or ways of representing the world which appear to be more acceptable and appeal to common sense. They attract a 'truth' label. They seem to account for situations in a way that is practical and straightforward to apply. Most often there are several discourses which surround an 'object'. An example might be the 'object' of the role of women in the church. For some denominations such as Pentecostalism and the Faith movements have positioned women being in leadership positions since the early 1900s as evangelists and healers for

example, Maria Beulah Woodworth Etter and Carrie Judd Montgomery (Miskov, 2011) Denominations in the UK also position women in various degrees of rightness to leadership positionings for example, Baptist and Methodist denominations have ordained women since the 1970s, so have positioned women alongside men as far as undertaking this role is concerned. Those who continued to position women in the traditional roles as wife, care giver, home maker, nurturer and also prone to error have been engaged in a fierce debate particularly in the Anglican church where there has been enough of a change of positioning for women to being seen as equal with men under God, equally but differently capable 'permitted' the full ordination of women in 1994. (It is not my intention to engage in this debate here, I use the issue as an example.) These discourses have an impact on behaviour as in the UK the dominant discourses are perhaps more towards equal leadership in the church, but the debate continues. The way women in leadership in the church are positioned ranges from full, unquestioning participation alongside men to absolutely no acceptance of any significant participation. Each different discourse makes a claim for the truth. Some discourses seem to be accepted as a truth and others not. As discourses are connected with the way society runs, which in turn gives shape and structure to life, what occurs in practice tends to be the discourses which attract the stamp of truth.

## 2. Doing Discourse Analysis

There is no one prescribed way of 'doing' discourse analysis. There is much fluidity in the concept of the analytical approach (Carabine, 2001). Generally, however, having selected the subject area and data, the analyst's next task is to become familiar with the material under examination, and to read and re read, watch and watch again, listen and listen. As the researcher becomes engaged and immersed in this process, themes will emerge which can be identified. Interrelationships between discourses can be looked for, techniques used in the discourses, silences, resistance and counter resistance. The effects, implications and functions of the various threads of discourse will also be revealed as the analyst engages with the relevant texts.

## 3. Data

This analysis uses as its data the clinic or prayer ministry sessions of the Signs and Wonders (MC 510) conference 1985, video recordings posted on YouTube<sup>31</sup> (J Wimber, 1985g) which was led by Wimber. There are many hours of material available online depicting the teachings of Wimber at the Signs and Wonders conferences disseminating his teaching. This is the material from which Kevin Springer wrote the text (endorsed by John Wimber) of *Power Evangelism* and *Power Healing* (Jenson, 1990). Much of the material taught in the conference sessions is recognisable therefore as the content of both *Power Evangelism* and *Power Healing*. Similar conferences were conducted by the Wimbbers all over the

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<sup>31</sup> YouTube. Search John Wimber Signs and Wonders 1985

world, but the original material was delivered by Wimber and C. Peter Wagner (P Wagner, 1983b) while they were both on staff at Fuller Seminary. The indications are, from the date on the postings, that the online YouTube presentations took place after the very popular course (MC 510) at Fuller had been cancelled due to the controversial nature of occurrences during the sessions (Hunt et al., 1997, C Wimber, 1999). This conference appears, from references made by Wimber on the clips, to have been held on Vineyard premises in Anaheim, over the period of one week. I have selected portions of the online presentations depicting how Wimber taught and demonstrated prayer ministry leading up to and during times that he called 'clinics'. I have transcribed the parts to be analysed from these YouTube videos in appendix 1. I have supplemented this data with material from a recent seminar which took place at the 2011 Vineyard National Leaders Conference. The relevant parts are transcribed in appendix 2. I have also selected material from Lewis (1989), *Healing: Fiction, Fantasy or Fact?* because it contains verbatim reports from the delegates at the conference in Harrogate. These delegates completed questionnaires and follow-up interviews were conducted by Lewis. I have focussed on using the verbatim reported in this work. The reports by Lewis (1989) are post conference recollections from the delegates. On occasions, they related what was actually said during the interactions rather than just that they were prayed for and received a measure of healing – or not. In addition, I have supplemented my data with material from current (2010-2011) Vineyard U.K. Church websites and publications.

### **3.1. Background To Data**

To consider for a moment the wider context of the evangelical church in the U.K. which during the 1980s was struggling to find effective approaches to evangelism and numerical church growth was on the decline (Back, 1986, Brierley, 1991). Having engaged in traditional evangelism strategies (for example, large scale rallies featuring high profile evangelists) at considerable expense with often disappointing results, the church was searching and ready for fresh practical ways of seeing and doing things to address this issue (Back, 1986). One of the things that Wimber did with those who would listen was to profoundly challenge the basic western cultures that had become established in the church, together with the way church life was done. New discourses were being constructed by Wimber and his colleagues and disseminated to the church through the conferences and church networks that were developing as a result of Wimber's activity, for example, Vineyard UK, New Wine and later, Soul Survivor.

The dominant discourses from Wimber were strong, but the details could be confused and contradictory and what his discourses were challenging were the well established, better worked through and accepted dominant discourses of the mainstream denominational churches. So Wimber was introducing a new worldview against the strongly dominant and prevailing discourses of the traditional, established church which of course drew more strength from the culturally more widely available discourses of science and reason in society. There was conflict between the two rival discourses.

Locating reports of the actual verbal interactions that take place during prayer ministry has not been easy. In one way this is not surprising as mostly they would be private and confidential and so not audible or reported. The video clips do show prayer ministry interactions that took place not only so that the delegate could receive prayer, but for demonstration purposes although often, much of that could not be heard. As depicted on the 1985 conference recordings available on YouTube (J Wimber, 1985g), which are divided into twelve programmes (sections on YouTube), Wimber taught over the first two programmes about his personal pilgrimage to the discovery of signs and wonders, and as I have described earlier in this thesis, the paradigm shift he said was needed in order to appreciate the full, supernatural nature of signs and wonders. Because of the way the recordings are divided into programme and part numbers which do not always seem to follow consistently, it is difficult to determine exactly in what order the sections would have been delivered.

Contained within the transcripts in appendix 1 are themes which speak of the structures within which prayer ministry operated. The Signs and Wonders conferences focussed upon explaining to the delegates why their previous Christian and church lives had been largely ineffective; because they, mostly unknowingly had embraced a secular western worldview which essentially excluded the supernatural power of God (J Wimber and Springer, 1992). This western worldview saw no need for understanding and embracing the supernatural, indeed many would have thought the 'supernatural' at the least undesirable and more likely dangerous because of its connotations with evil; the concept of spiritual life being more intellectual, requiring knowledge and cerebral

learning thus rendering it largely innate. Science, reason and rationality had become an integral and accepted part of general and consequently Christian culture. The more common dominant discourses of science and education were accepted as being able to account for or deal with most things. So Wimber strongly challenged this secular science worldview and stressed that because individuals in a modern culture could not see things the way Jesus did, their evangelism programmes had limited effect. He also suggested the way inhabitants of non technological countries (as he called them) accounted for life, where more often the concepts of malevolent and benevolent spirits were used to account for the variances and incomprehensible parts of life and so a demonstration that Jesus was more powerful than their spirits could result in the conversion of inhabitants of less developed countries (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 81). He had explained that this accounted for the large numerical growth of churches in countries such as Argentina, Korea and some African countries (J Wimber and Springer, 1992) and that this fact supported his view that seeing things this way (with signs and wonders) would promote effective church growth in 'technological' countries.

These new discourses which spoke of paradigm shifts, the kingdom of God, power encounters, power evangelism, power healing, the power of Satan, the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth could be seen to be brought into reality by engagement in prayer ministry. It is in prayer ministry encounters (which Wimber demonstrated in the context of the clinic sessions) that the kingdom of God could be said to be advancing as the works of the enemy in individual's lives (that is, sickness and evil spirits) were identified as such, mostly

through the operation of words of knowledge, and addressed as the delegates were prayed for, and possibly healed or exorcised of evil spirits. This acted as a demonstration to the delegates of how to pray for each other. This practice brought about the very distinct style of one to one prayer ministry in Wimber Vineyard where it is still today, common practice for ministry time and prayer ministry to take place as part of most Wimber Vineyard services.<sup>32</sup>

The purpose of the Signs and Wonders conferences was to disseminate the teaching of Wimber to church members and demonstrate and train everyone in a model for healing (Appendix 1, p. 5, Lewis, 1989, p. 10). As Wimber stated in *Power Healing*, having seen his first healing, he set about developing a model for healing “from which large numbers of Christians may be trained to heal the sick” (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 181). He developed teaching to explain his theology and methodology of divine healing and “what emerged was what I call an ‘integrated model of healing’, a model from which any Christian may learn to pray for the sick” (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 182). He explained that he called it an integrated model because God heals the whole person, body, soul and spirit. During the conference sessions, once numerous words of knowledge had been given and those who had been singled out by that means had been called to the stage and prayed for as a demonstration, the delegates were more or less divided into two groups, those who needed healing and those who would start to pray for them. There were Wimber team members who were asked to move through the entire space and make themselves available as ‘coaches’ to the delegates (Appendix 1, p. 40).

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<sup>32</sup> See for example <http://lynnvineyardchurch.blogspot.com>, <http://www.gatewayvineyardnorwich.org.uk/get-involved/worship-prayer-ministry-events/>, <http://www.bournemouthvineyard.com/index.php?page=small-ministry-teams>

At the start of what appears to be the first 'clinic', having announced that a clinic was about to occur and that the delegates should "lay [their] stuff down", Wimber gave a 5 – 6 minute preamble centring on and reaffirming what he would have been teaching during the previous sessions, the presupposed western science worldviews that he assumed most of the delegates would have attended with. Pertinent to this clinic moment would be the presumption that the delegates' study and knowledge would have, up until this time, not included the concept of the supernatural in their perceptions. According to Wimber, because of the increasing secularisation and demystification of Western culture, Christians had over time let go of the supernatural and found other ways of accounting for, for example, illness. Instead Christians had taken up generally available dominant discourses of science and reason, the effect of which meant that Christians had come to depend on these things rather than the supernatural power of God as a way of explanation and solution for problems. Wimber found different ways of communicating the concept that westernised practice of Christianity was incomplete, by which he meant without the demonstration or illustration of the supernatural power of God which for Wimber, came in the form of healing, signs and wonders, mostly via the receiving and giving of words of knowledge (Appendix 1, pp. 2-3).

This part of my thesis explores the constructions, subject positions and psychological representations of those in the roles of prayer minister, prayer responder and leader as undergirded by the teachings of John Wimber. I examine discourses for the effects, implications, consequences and functions

which emerge in the selected texts. I will argue that those in the roles of prayer minister, prayer responder and leader, all participants in a ministry event are positioned and take up subject positions within the dominant Wimber worldview discourses. One of the ways this occurs is by the use of their own in-house language, rhetoric and turns of phrase which establish and reinforce the dominant discourses.

In the discourse analysis which follows, I will attempt to explore questions such as what it is that enables a prayer responder to render and position themselves so apparently vulnerable in the prayer ministry encounter; and how it is that prayer ministers position themselves to accept responsibility for receiving and giving accurate information involving responders (since, according to the five-step model, there was an expectation for them to do so). I will also explore the role of leaders and how they are placed in and take up subject positions where they are able to exercise control in prayer ministry times by governing the performance and timing of when the Holy Spirit comes as well as identifying and stating what it is that God is saying, doing and what it is that God wants.

#### **4. Procedure**

In order to undertake this analysis, I read and reread my chosen texts numerous times, watched and re-watched the YouTube videos and listened repeatedly to the podcasts from which I have drawn the material I have used. I allowed key ideas to emerge from this reading and listening. As I became engaged with and immersed in my data, I was looking for recurrent themes and patterns,

representations and positionings concerning those engaged in the practice of prayer ministry in Wimber Vineyard. Drawing on my selected material a number of discourses and constructions emerged which I identified and address here. These are, 1, 'Science and Knowledge': a supernatural world view discourse, 2, 'Expectation and Suggestibility': a discourse of anticipation, 3, 'Leadership': a discourse of charisma, 4, 'What God Wants: God's desires and performance discourse, 5, 'Directing God': a controlling discourse and 6, 'Phenomena': a discourse of mystery.

## **PART II – THE ANALYSIS**

### **1. ‘Science And Knowledge’: A Supernatural Worldview Discourse**

In the texts that reflect this theme, the construction of the delegates presents them as westernised, worldly and secular, implying and sometimes explicitly stating that they would have little or no perception or appreciation of the supernatural which is required for affecting healing. The general dominant cultural discourses of science and reason operated and functioned to normalise the way individuals thought about, and accounted for, the things that happen in life. These modernist discourses would say that there was a rational explanation for everything; these explanations may not all have been discovered yet, but the way society was organised and run had been researched and verified by science. Scientific knowledge and ways of being have acquired a normalness and are generally accepted in society. They have the ‘stamp of truth’. As Gavey has observed, “Dominant discourses appear natural ... gaining their authority by appealing to common sense” (Gavey, 1989, p. 464). The norms or naturalness operate as a yardstick against which ‘others’, that is those who are not caught up in the generally accepted norm, are measured. Clumpus noted that, “These norms acquire a naturalness and usually a superiority which position the other” (Clumpus, 1996, p. 237). The knowledge about what is normal determines not only practice but also a way of understanding a frame of reference (Gavey, 1992). So, in the context of this study, the supernaturalism so all pervasive in the lifetime of Jesus Christ had, according to Wimber become excluded from current life and so, Wimber’s expectation was that the delegates came with a frame of

reference which relied on the dominant science and knowledge discourses as the following extract shows.

**Extract 1:** “In our western civilization we have had a propensity for and a preoccupation with study and knowledge. We have equated the gaining of knowledge with power... in the church today we have been conditioned to the same value system. The church today is worldly, is westernized. We’re so secularized we have almost completely eliminated the supernatural from our perceptions” (J Wimber, 1985b, Appendix 1, pp. 1-2).

The implications of this are that, in terms of the secular versus supernatural discourses, Wimber clearly positioned the delegates, and maybe they also took up these positions themselves, as naïve and uninitiated in the knowledge, understanding and ways of the supernatural. This was important to establish because the whole of Wimber’s teaching was dependent on a frame of reference based on gaining access to the supernatural which thus provided him with a way of seeing that allowed him to interpret behaviours and phenomena in terms of the supernatural.

Because he brought a theology and way of thinking that was new to most, Wimber was able to position himself, by contrast from the delegates as an expert and authority figure. He personally owned his way of thinking and practising and demonstrated this by using the pronoun “I” constantly. He did not share the acquisition of his philosophy with anyone else (with the possible exception of his wife Carol (C Wimber, 1999).

**Extract 2:** “Most of us are confused by how to live the life of faith. I have learned to walk in the Spirit and do more than I learned by

the methodological means and the kinds of principles that I was trained in" (J. Wimber, 1985a, Appendix 1, p. 18)

**Extract 3:** "I never know when I ask God to do these things, what He is about to do. There was a day when I worried about it. Now I don't worry any more" (Appendix 1, p. 3).

The construction of himself as the expert and authority figure is reinforced in these extracts, in his Christian life he had moved from where the delegates were and was now way ahead of them. He also, despite his humble and affable reputation, had no difficulty in claiming this position for himself. He used "I" over and over again which served to set himself apart from, in this case the delegates, but also all those who listened to him all over the world, for example he said, "I have learned ... I know ... I have the experience ... I don't worry any more".

Wimber's subject position was reinforced by the way the delegates absorbed and came to practise what he was teaching, and also by the presence of the team who accompanied him, supporting and assisting him, particularly 'Blaine'<sup>33</sup> who was visible and referred to most often in the material I have deconstructed, but there were others acting as 'coaches' when the delegates were encouraged to start praying for each other as the conference progressed (Appendix 1, p. 40). The contrast between Wimber, his team and the delegates was stark. Wimber made this difference plain by the way he spoke to the delegates and many times positioned them as unaware, not tuned in, not sensing or feeling 'these things' compared to himself as being competent and experienced, sensing and picking

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<sup>33</sup> Blaine Cook has been cited as a close associate of John Wimber. He is mentioned several times in *Power Healing* and in Appendix D by Dr David C. Lewis who conducted a study of UK Wimber conferences. Lewis quotes Cook a number of times and called him "one of Wimber's assistants" Wimber, J. and Springer, K. (1986) **Power Healing**. London: Hodder and Stoughton. (p. 255). He was certainly present in a similar role at the conference I attended in London in 1984.

up on what God was doing, seemingly easily. In the following extracts he appeared to continue to reinforce the positioning of the delegates as being stuck in the ways of the old worldview and almost unable to move from there, so never able to be aware of the supernatural power available to them. In extracts 4 and 5 he said, and the inference was, that it was Wimber's judgement, that the presence of the Lord had been incredible but the delegates could not feel it or were not aware of it.

**Extract 4:** "Some of you are looking at me and saying, I don't feel anything. Well the Lord is here, He's here powerfully, He's here to do miracles. And so be aware, because if you are not aware of the presence of God, you can never be aware of the power" (Appendix 1, p. 28).

**Extract 5:** "The presence of the Lord in our meetings has been incredible. Some of you have a very limited awareness of that. You're really not all that tuned in yet" (Appendix 1, p. 30).

It is almost as though Wimber was unsure of whether he wanted these people to be drawn along with him, in which case they could start to become more his equal, or whether it actually suited him more to keep them feeling ignorant, or thinking they were just not getting it – a situation which would have maintained his authority and status. As I will show, there is a constant demonstration of ambiguity in what Wimber said in many areas. In this instance, because the conference was about equipping the saints for ministry, the stated intention was to bring the delegates into this new way of thinking, but on many occasions, seemed to keep telling them that they were not grasping the concepts adequately and were just not tuned in yet. This must have felt very confusing to many of the

delegates who were trying to work out whether they were able to engage and practise in signs and wonders or not.

**Extract 6:** “To move in the Spirit, you’ve got to be able to feel these things, to be able to sense them, to know them. Moving in the Spirit is a bit like surfing, you’ve got to learn how to catch the waves...I know this because I have been surfing for a long time now” (Appendix 1, p. 33-34).

Wimber seemed to be saying that he could feel and sense the presence of the Lord very powerfully but emphasised and stated that the delegates still had very little useful awareness and as such, they were not aware of the power or able to ‘catch the waves’ like he could. This would have maintained and reproduced the dominant leadership and authority discourses and sustained the delegates in a subject position of being very dependent on him for getting direction and instructions from God.

The team supporting Wimber were able to practise words of knowledge and pray for the delegates. It seemed as though extraordinary (in this setting) acts of knowing and healing were occurring during the clinics. Wimber and the team also presented themselves and what they were teaching in an affable, warm and safe light. This was inferred as part of the prayer Wimber used to start the first clinic.

**Extract 7:** “We thank you Lord that you’re like a bridegroom waiting for the bride, that you are anxious and caring and sensitive and loving and generous and warm and that you know every single human being that is in this place” (Appendix 1, p. 3)

He had spent a considerable amount of time up until this point telling the delegates his story and relating incidents, particularly the story of Lonnie Frisbee - referred to earlier in this thesis, which to the uninitiated could have sounded pretty bizarre but also would have made a considerable contribution to the air of expectation and excitement which was being set up. Also, having said that he no longer worried about what could happen, he then said, "It's so much fun. I like to watch people do weird things because I like what happens to them afterwards" (Appendix 1, p. 3). So now he realised that he had probably frightened some of the delegates with the prospect of weird behaviour and he needed to reassure them which he did with the content of the prayer. He was also anticipating all this with some amusement. He was laughing and making the delegates laugh, which as the next extract shows had a purpose behind it. Wimber used humour frequently in order to draw people into the new worldview together with the new practices and ways of seeing things. As he observed,

**Extract 8:** "One of the reasons why we kid and say things lightly is that we're trying to release you" (Appendix 1, p. 33).

Wimber presented the new worldview discourses as being the normal 'taken for granted' ones, the ones which God intended (J Wimber and Springer, 1992), the ones they should understand and operate in, which those in less developed countries were enabled by but which the sophistications of the developed world had left behind. These new worldview discourses produced and established a 'truth' of the kingdom of God, spiritual warfare being very much part of the construction. The opposition to the power of God from the powers of Satan, how that was

seen and played out on the earth and in the lives of human beings was encompassed in this discourse. A worldview dominated by science and knowledge-based discourses had the effect of excluding the supernatural and therefore what was available from God. Wimber continually defended his position whilst positioning the delegates as having inadequate understanding and so missing out on much. They had done some things right such as reading the Bible, but they had not taken it far enough, they had not acted on it and that made their practices and lifestyle incomplete.

**Extract 9:** “We’ve come to a place where we really think the pursuit of study has become an end in itself...But to study [the Bible] without acting upon it is incomplete” (Appendix 1. p. 2).

Wimber was persuading and berating them at the same time. He was using his charm and affable character to say things that could have had a negative effect and been resisted by many people.

As an aside, this is the message still clearly preached now. At the Vineyard National Leaders Conference in 2011, during a seminar entitled *How To Do Ministry Time Or Kill Yourself Trying*, the speaker said it was when the Holy Spirit comes and touches that change occurs, not just by reading the Bible, something has to be done, that is ministry time.

**Extract 10:** “You have to study and do the stuff” (D Smith and Smith, 2011).

Further to the aside, there is a clear inference here that change or conversion cannot come by reading the Bible alone. I would dispute this as I have heard testimonies in the past of those who have been converted as a direct result of reading the Bible. The following contemporary testimony confirms this. “I read the entire New Testament ...and recognised that the Bible had to be either completely true or completely false...I had reached rock bottom and had to give God a chance if He was real. I prayed and asked God to make Himself real to me if He existed. I felt such an overwhelming surge of emotion in my heart...that I knew it had to be God. That day...I was born again” (RB Dorset 2012. Used with permission).

Returning to the 1985 conference, Wimber, having asked the delegates to stand as the clinic started, he then prayed. Then while they were waiting for the Spirit, what he then said demonstrates that Wimber here still had the delegates positioned in their old religious constructions dominated by science and rational discourses, so at odds with waiting for the unknown,

**Extract 11:** “Don’t get too religious, just relax” (Appendix 1, p. 3).

This seems strange as the conference was about attempting to move them out from these old religious constructions as in the following extract.

**Extract 12:** “We are the people of the king... We are His instruments in that the works of the kingdom are performed through us. Thus the purpose is to witness what God has done and what He is going to do and what He is doing in the present. It is also to be the instrument through which God works His purpose in the

world. We have come to do the will of the Father” (Appendix 1, p. 18).

## **2. ‘Expectation And Suggestibility’: A Discourse Of Anticipation**

Wimber was also building an air of expectation and anticipation. There are very many examples in the selected texts where Wimber raises anticipation and expectation and makes clear suggestion regarding what may happen among the delegates. This is not necessarily achieved by Wimber being specific, but more likely by him saying that having asked the Holy Spirit to come, he would not know what was going to happen or what God was going to do. For example, he said, “What we are about to do ... we’re going to ask him to come ... to give us direction ... what the Spirit does, we are going to do ... I never know ... what He is about to do. There was a day when I worried about it. Now I don’t worry any more” (Appendix 1, pp. 2, 3). He had previously told them the story of Lonnie Frisbee cited earlier in this study, so there was already considerable anticipation regarding the sort of things that may happen. It would also probably be fair to say that most delegates were at least curious, and judging by the responses visible on the video clip, keen to engage in what was going on which would have generated and contributed to an undercurrent of anticipation.

### **2.1. The Power of Suggestion**

Briefly exploring the power of suggestion, there are a range of contexts from which suggestion or suggestibility is of interest or could be a significant factor in this context for example, firstly the placebo effect where an inert or non specific

substance together with belief or a positive attitude can make a positive difference for instance in the relief of pain (Charron et al., 2006, Skevington, 1995). Secondly, distortion of memory such as false memory syndrome and interrogative suggestibility where during formal questioning the response of a witness or suspect may be affected by the biases, pressures or suggestions of interviewers exerted thus contaminating the memory of the interviewee (Bruck and Ceci, 1996, Gudjonsson, 1987). And thirdly there are common links between suggestion and hypnotism. McKenna notes that, "Hypnosis evolved as a way of enhancing suggestibility through language and psychological techniques" (McKenna, 1993, p. 12). These and other contexts concerning suggestion all have an impact on altering behaviour or experience. Fourthly, Krissy Wilson, exploring the power of suggestion said, "Magicians have been exploiting our vulnerability to suggestion for centuries in order to achieve all kinds of illusions and sleight of hand tricks. One of the basic tools used by magicians is the practice of misdirection which is made possible by the power of suggestion" (Wilson, 2011, p. 783).

I am not suggesting that Wimber consciously knew that techniques surrounding suggestibility would get him a desired result. However, just because he most likely was not overtly using those strategies does not mean that they were not in operation and that the delegates were not in varying degrees of anticipation, expectation and suggestibility thus making phenomena and manifestations more likely to become evident to them. He indicated that anticipation was important when he said,

**Extract 13:** “We have come to a place where we don't anticipate God to operate as God among us” (Appendix 1, p. 2,)

again positioning the delegates in the old worldview. He also said that whilst he did not know why God did things the way He did, he did know:

**Extract 14:** “that if we don't expect Him to do things, He won't do anything” (Appendix 1, p. 16-17).

This placed a heavy emphasis on the importance of expectation for Wimber whilst also seemingly restricting God to being able to act only when He is expected to do so. That the concepts of expectation and suggestibility were in action is demonstrable. On many occasions Wimber made it plain that if there was no expectation then not much would happen.

A very similar message is still being preached today. During a *How To Do Ministry Time* seminar (podcast) held at a Vineyard Leaders Conference in 2011, the delegates were told,

**Extract 15:** “Plan and expect God is going to come. Be expectant of it and plan for it ... Allow your faith level to rise ... The more you do this, you get into the zone, the more you're living and expecting things to happen all the time ... Now there's expectation in the room, there's a level of faith in the room, there's expectation. God is here speaking” (Appendix 2, D Smith and Smith, 2011).

This sounds more overt and explicit than the way in which Wimber raised expectation. Interestingly, however, as part of this seminar the leaders conducted several 'live' demonstrations where they firstly asked the delegates

whether they wanted a 'whoosh moment'. They then proceeded to pray for those who stood for a 'whoosh moment' and told them that they may feel heat, trembling or tingling lips. They may also see eyelids fluttering, shaking and heat on faces. It was a 'how to' seminar and there were three or four further demonstrations when God and the Holy Spirit seemed to be expected to 'show up' and demonstrate or verify the point that was being taught (it was difficult to count because the teaching element and the demonstrations were sort of interactive, merging in and out from each other). But the delegates were still being told what to expect and that expectation was a prerequisite. This can be a problem in terms of the sovereignty of God and whether He would choose to heal at that point or not.

Generally the practice of obtaining words of knowledge also acted to raise expectation as in the following extracts:

**Extract 16:** "This [giving words of knowledge] is a really good thing to do in front of people [on Sunday morning] ... it raises faith, it's like God is here. He's going to do something. (Appendix 2, D Smith and Smith, 2011).

**Extract 17:** "We're going to give several words of knowledge ... God gives them as a faith lifter. It'll help the people that you pray for believe that they are going to be healed" (Appendix 1, p. 13).

**Extract 18:** "Father we invite you now, by the Spirit to begin showing us those that you have singled out tonight to heal" (Appendix 1, p. 13).

**Extract 19:** "We lift ourselves to you Lord and ask for your direction, that you would move by your Spirit, showing that which you want to accomplish today ... Now we'll wait" (Appendix 1, p. 19).

There is an apparent contradiction here, as Wimber expected that every Christian could be trained to heal. During the conference, once the early words of knowledge had been given, most clinics ended in a kind of 'free for all' where either a very common complaint was brought, like insomnia to which a large number of people responded, to "anyone here that needs healing ... hands up, how did so many Christians get that sick?" But clearly Wimber knew that not everyone was healed. In fact Wimber himself was a prime example of this, since he suffered continually with multiple illnesses. He devoted a chapter to this subject in *Power Healing* (1986). The bar of expectation is set high but those who are not healed are largely ignored as the five-step prayer model demonstrated where the only suggestion was that they come back again another time.

Lewis, in his analysis of the Sheffield (UK) Signs and Wonders Conference held in 1985, said, "The words of knowledge themselves generated faith and an expectancy of healing on the part of both the 'healers' and the 'healed'. If as they believe, God has given a word of knowledge about a person's condition then they can expect God to heal that condition, whatever it might be. Their model is of Jesus himself, who said, 'the Son ...can only do what he sees his Father doing' (John 5:19); therefore if the Father has given a word of knowledge they see that as evidence of 'what the Father is doing'" (Lewis, 1986, p. 254,255). However, as Lewis went on to discuss this in further detail, he explained that cases of instantaneous change were not the rule, many others reported either gradual or no change at all. Lewis recounted that Wimber himself cited figures from studies conducted in the USA where thirty percent reported some measure of healing, an

additional ten percent after a second session of prayer and up to seventy percent after ten sessions of prayer. Even by Wimber Vineyard's own admission, their claims for healing were not matched by the results of the studies. Also as Lewis noted, verifying who received prayer for what and with what result was very problematic. Many physical conditions would not have been medically diagnosed and even if they had, doctors are human and can make errors. Some conditions would resolve naturally anyway. Acquiring post prayer medical reports was also fraught with difficulty, and although Lewis did achieve this in some cases in his 1989 Harrogate report, the medical reports often did not correlate with the patient's view of their condition.

Against this background, one particular interaction between a prayer minister (Blaine on this occasion, with some intervention from Wimber) and a prayer responder (a woman introduced as 'Sylvia') is of great interest. Wimber delegated the praying, in this case, to Blaine and said he would be the commentator. Those who had come forward in response to the words of knowledge had been standing on the stage for some time as Wimber had been explaining how they chose who to pray for first. He said they did this by operating in a supernatural perspective, they looked at the people for indications of the Father's working on individuals. They saw this either through distinguishing of spirits or natural means. Wimber gave no explanation of what they were looking for by whichever means, but he said they looked because of an assumption, that they were doing what the Father was doing. So the teaching and helping people to understand how they might start to operate like this themselves was vague to say the least. Then, on this occasion, Wimber suggested that although these

people had responded to the words of knowledge, of which there had been seven, some of them might have been mistaken in identifying themselves. They may have heard wrong, thought it was something else or “any number of combinations” (Appendix 1, p. 5). But he continued, “even if they’ve come up here misunderstanding, it’s quite likely they are going to get healed ... He’s ready to heal those who we haven’t had a word of knowledge about” (Appendix 1, p. 6). It is difficult to imagine how those who had come forward must have been feeling by this time, having had the courage to come to the stage and then Wimber infer that they may have made a mistake. Wimber is really making it difficult for the delegates to gain any confidence as he continued to position them in a fairly difficult place emotionally and spiritually. I would suggest that this would render the responders even more vulnerable and therefore more suggestible. They would have no way (apart from their own personal judgement criteria, which would not have developed to include this type of situation) of being able to decide whether what was happening was safe for them and they would have been susceptible to the instructions and information they were being given by Wimber or Blaine, who interpreted what was occurring very specifically. This would strengthen and reinforce the subject position of Wimber as the authority figure and conversely the subject positions of the delegates in their relative ignorance.

Wimber then continued by introducing his concept of the five-step procedure – a method of working through the process of prayer ministry previously cited in this thesis (my p. 146). Blaine selected Sylvia to pray for first, and Wimber in his commentary explained that Blaine was interviewing her, asking her what her condition was. There was no mention of whether she was responding to one of

the previously given words of knowledge and reviewing the words given, none fitted very accurately with her condition so far. As the interaction could not be heard, it was not evident how Blaine conversed with her or how he diagnosed her condition and how he selected what kind of prayer to use. He did not use a microphone, but some of what he said is audible on the video recording; he asked her if she felt power on her. This was a closed question, she could only answer yes or no. It also introduced the suggestion that 'power' was what Blaine expected her to feel. If she answered, it was not possible to see or hear. Then Wimber, commentating, asked the delegates if they could see what they (Blaine and himself) said they could see. He stated that there was energy on her body and then attributed that energy to the healing power of God. At this stage, there was very little observable in terms of phenomena and Wimber continued by explaining that Blaine was helping her 'get in tune' because she was unlikely to have been conscious of what was happening to her. There was only one explanation that Wimber gave of what was said to be happening and that was that "It's the healing power of God" (Appendix 1, p. 7). Blaine had his hands around her cheeks but this touching would not happen in the present day. Direct contact between prayer minister and prayer responder is discouraged now because of the misunderstandings that can occur. The original reason for not touching was that it was 'too hot and sweaty' in the gymnasium the Vineyard church used to meet in (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 222) and subsequently not touching became the accepted norm. Wimber then asked Sylvia to open her hands which had been clasped in front of her. His explanation for doing this was that the clasped hands were a sign that she was keeping herself feeling safe (if he was correct, then she was feeling unsafe) and said that he could see that her

folded hands stopped the power of God on her body. He again asked the delegates if they could see the energy on her body. As Blaine interacted with her, Wimber's commentary inferred that Blaine was holding her up, but at that stage, Sylvia was only breathing more deeply and looking a bit pink. Blaine still had his hands around her face and neck. This would not have helped to hold her up. She did shortly afterwards start to wobble and stagger more and a chair was provided for her. So did she start behaving (wobbling) as Wimber had said she would, to the extent that she needed help to remain upright because she had heard him say that Blaine was needing to hold her up? That cannot be known. Blaine again could be heard to tell Sylvia that the Lord was going to heal her condition right now and that she could feel the power of the Lord coming over her right now. He moved away from her shortly after this. Wimber commentated that she was not being ignored, but that she was being left to 'stew', that the Spirit of God was ministering to her and they had done their part. There is more than a hint of suggestion here as Sylvia is told what she was feeling, what it meant and that the fact that her head was falling back and forward was because the power of God was rippling over her. Once Blaine had prayed with another man, Wimber turned his attention back to Sylvia who had remained in the chair and asked her a series of closed questions intimating that she was feeling pretty good and rested and not feeling mad with anyone (Appendix 1, p. 9). He then asked her if she wanted to sit a bit longer, but she got up and stumbled a little. Wimber offered her support as she remained a little unsteady. He laughed and the delegates laughed. He said, "That's okay, it's just power. When she took hold of my hand, energy went through her and through me and it's just the power of God" (Appendix 1, p. 9). He then proceeded to interview her about what had

happened. Blaine had prayed for a neck condition and Sylvia added that it was a sinus condition, she had been choking all through the session and trying to hear. Wimber added that it had been draining down the back of her neck. According to the words of knowledge given earlier, the person with a neck condition was male and the person with the drainage was caused by a mastoid infection. So there was a minimal correlation so far between her personal circumstances and the words of knowledge previously presented to the congregation. Wimber then asked her if Blaine had prayed for a female problem and Sylvia replied, "He said I had a female condition and I don't know whether that's healed or not. I don't know what it is" (Appendix 1, p. 9). So Sylvia did not assume ownership of a problem she knew nothing about and of course it is not known whether anything was wrong with Sylvia that was as yet undiagnosed, or whether it had been healed. Sylvia had taken up a position at least within her own knowledge and frame of reference of herself, but this did not deter Wimber and Blaine who came back to her at this point. Blaine asked her to put her hand on her abdomen and he put his hand on top of hers. He was saying or praying something which was inaudible. After a few seconds Wimber said "There you go, there you go" (Appendix 1, p. 10), he was laughing. He then repeated what Blaine had said, "I speak to this affliction in the name of Jesus. I speak to this affliction" (Appendix 1, p. 10). He continued to explain that Blaine was speaking to some internal organs but that Sylvia was not aware of there being any problem, but the Lord was speaking to Blaine about it. He then asked again whether the delegates could see the power on them (Sylvia and Blaine), but offered no commentary regarding how Blaine had prayed regarding an 'affliction'. Blaine and Wimber then turned their attention elsewhere and Sylvia remained standing there.

Wimber spoke with another man who Blaine had been praying for, explaining to the delegates that the power of God was on this man. When he had finished that, he came back to Sylvia and asked her how she was. She said she was fine. Wimber said, "You feel better do you, how does your stomach feel. Nose feels better, stomach feels better. You happy you came?" She said, "Yes I am". He asked her if she wanted her money back and she said no. He shook her hand and she left the stage.

On the whole, it was Wimber's version of events that was communicated to the delegates. Even though Sylvia had refuted any knowledge of female problems, these two men continued to impose them on her by focussing their praying in that region. Blaine also started to call it an affliction but there was no explanation about what that might mean. Wimber was inferring that he could see things happening when he said, "there you go, there you go" and laughed. There was little visible happening. Yes, Sylvia did experience some mild manifestations which she might easily have been suggestible to as she would have heard stories about them in the conference sessions and while she was on the stage. In this type of situation, in front of hundreds of people in the first clinic time, some of this can be accounted for in other ways. It may have been divine activity, but nothing was done or said to verify that and the background of the whole scenario seemed to make it unthinkable that some of what was occurring may have been the normal reactions of a potentially anxious human person, possibly feeling unsafe in those circumstances. The expectation and sense of anticipation that had been built up would make much of what happened likely. There is a possibility that Sylvia reacted in this way because expectation was created in her in that Wimber

intimated that she needed to held up before she was showing any observable signs that this was the case. Also, there was the assumed authority of Wimber and Blaine which would have been reinforced by the receiving and giving of words of knowledge, their manner and certainty regarding their interpretation of events that sometimes could not be observed or confirmed by anyone else.

### **3. 'Leadership': A Discourse Of Charisma**

John Wimber was obviously a high profile leader with charisma. As I have said previously, before he became a Christian he was in leadership roles in the music industry either as a producer or band leader. He could certainly be said to have many of the qualities of a charismatic leader as described by Weber (1947) and later Willner (1984). From the work of Weber, Willner extracted four core characteristics which centre upon the relationship between a leader and their followers. In summary: firstly the leader is perceived to be somehow superhuman by their followers, secondly, the leader is blindly believed by the followers, thirdly the followers unconditionally comply with directives from the leader and fourthly the followers give the leader unqualified emotional commitment. Percy considered Wimber's leadership style and discussed these very strong qualities as they may have applied to Wimber, who he thought did attract these charismatic leadership characteristics. Percy's study addressed the conflation of divine and human power which in this instance rests in the office of leadership. In Wimber's case, Percy proposed that, "Wimber's charisma could be seen as being a nodal point of power conflation, in which God's power and human power are merged to the extent that Wimber's charisma cannot easily be distinguished from

that of the Spirit” (Percy, 1996b, p. 51). He suggested that Wimber evidenced superhuman qualities by his ability to demonstrate miracles, signs and wonders. That he had, and still has, followers is beyond dispute and that many of them believed in and complied with what he said is demonstrated in the many conferences and the subsequent development of Vineyard Churches around the world. The continued emotional commitment is demonstrated as Wimber’s catchphrases are persistently quoted often in Vineyard church settings, for example ‘everyone gets to play’, ‘doing the stuff’, ‘being naturally supernatural’, ‘the now and not yet’ and ‘come Holy Spirit’. These and other sayings have been incorporated into ten ‘Vineyard Distinctives’ (J Mumford, 2010), that is, according to John Mumford, current Vineyard UK leader, things that set the Vineyard apart and assure Vineyard’s continued presence. In their *Ministry Times* seminar, Dave and Laura Smith suggested that the reason why some of the denominations would not be here by 2050 was because they do not do ‘ministry time’ (D Smith and Smith, 2011). Don Williams, following his survey of Vineyard pastors said, “The conclusion is clear. The values, teaching and modelling of John Wimber are still at the heart of the Vineyard’s life. He has provided the Vineyard’s ‘genetic code’” (Williams, 2005, p. 179). Wimber’s name and what he said is referred to often and everywhere in Vineyard circles and at any Vineyard event. Many Vineyard church websites have a mention of Wimber in their history of the Vineyard. Wimber and his phrases and catchphrases are mentioned in numerous current sermon podcasts, seminars, conference proceedings and so on – too many to mention.

There is also a strong case here for seeing that the subject positionings of both Wimber and his audience/followers was socially constructed. Charisma is something that is recognised and reflected back by the followers, that is created between the parties involved rather than being an objective quality. It is the response to and recognition of charisma that gives it a presence. It really does not exist unless there are others there to validate it. Wimber certainly exhibited this interaction with his followers at the 1985 conference. They allowed themselves to be drawn into the scenarios that Wimber created for them, which in turn reinforced his confidence and position. He also continually reminded them of his status as being the one through whom God communicated, strengthening his supernatural and leadership positioning. The following extracts illustrate the way Wimber took up his subject positioning as the charismatic leader through whom God communicated.

**Extract 20:** “He’ll [God] give me direction in a moment” (Appendix 1, p. 3).

**Extract 21:** “He’s [God] giving me some words of knowledge” (Appendix 1, p. 4).

**Extract 22:** “Okay, the Lord is stirring me” (Appendix 1, p. 4).

**Extract 23:** “Alright, so I am going to invite the Spirit of God to give us words of knowledge” (Appendix 1, p. 13).

**Extract 24:** “I could see the power of God coming down her body” (Appendix 1, p. 7).

At the same time Wimber made the only subject position available to, certainly many of the delegates, was the one where they could be responsible for stopping the process of the move of the Holy Spirit. He continued to locate them within

their old worldview discourses of religion, being bound up in the old doctrines, of not being receptive enough, being uptight and potentially difficult to help as the next extracts show.

**Extract 25:** “Don’t get too religious, just relax. If you stir yourself up to much, it stops the process” (Appendix 1, p. 3).

**Extract 26:** “Some of you are bound up, you have been taught doctrine that is directly antagonistic towards what is about to happen to you. That doctrine is binding, it has power over you. I’m going to pray and break the power hold ... Some of you are more receptive, more responsive than others” (Appendix 1, pp. 39-40).

**Extract 27:** “So relax, don’t try to get spiritual on me, all that will do is slow down the process. The more uptight you get, the more difficult it will be to help you ... Now relax, you’re going to like this stuff” (Appendix 1, p. 40).

Then the receiving and giving of the words of knowledge authenticated Wimber’s implied claims for himself. Wimber, from the way he talked about himself could be seen to claim that he had earned the right to be in this position because of what he had learned and the experiences he had had. The following extracts demonstrate the way Wimber took up his subject position of authority, because of his experiences and learning which he considered were over and above that of the delegates. At the same time, deficiencies are located in the delegates and this had the function of maintaining and reproducing the dominant leadership discourses.

**Extract 28:** “I have learned to walk in the spirit and do more” (Appendix 1, p. 18).

**Extract 29:** “Moving in the spirit is a bit like surfing, you’ve got to learn how to catch the waves ... I know this because I have been surfing for a long time now” (Appendix 1, p. 33-34).

**Extract 30:** “I’m only doing this to help the healing process” (Appendix 1, p. 13).

**Extract 31:** “Over the last seven years I have been learning to wait on God” (Appendix 1, p. 16).

**Extract 32:** “a number of you have tingling and energy and heat in your hands ... That is an unction or anointing that God gives ... I used to get it a lot when I first started praying for the sick. I hardly ever get it now...” (Appendix 1, pp. 23-24).

**Extract 33:** “Now what we are trying to do is teach you to see the Spirit of God” (Appendix 1, p. 11).

Another aspect of Wimber’s leadership was how for him, there was a lot of fun and almost entertainment in what was happening. The following extracts show how he enjoyed what happened with the delegates when he was operating this way.

**Extract 34:** “I like to watch people do weird things because I like what happens to them afterwards” (Appendix 1, p. 3).

**Extract 35:** “give me your hand so you don’t fall down”, she stumbled again and he laughed, the delegates all laughed and he said, “That’s okay, it’s just power” (Appendix 1, p. 9).

**Extract 36:** “Ha ha, I like that” (Appendix 1, p. 15).

**Extract 37:** But I like what happens when we pray this way” (Appendix 1, p. 17).

**Extract 38:** “Isn’t it wonderful? Don’t you like this stuff? I never get tired of this stuff” (Appendix 1, p. 15).

**Extract 39:** “Whenever we come to this point, I just love it. The juices start flowing in my mouth because we are going to do some risk taking. But I don’t know what God is going to do. What if He does nothing? That would be weird. What if I missed what He is telling me and we go into some strange direction, that would be strange too. What if I don’t? What if I hear what God is saying and we do exactly what He wants done? What if? Do you see the adventure in it? Every time it’s fun, every time it’s

exciting. It's predictable only in one respect, that God is going to take control. Okay. Lets pray" (Appendix 1, p. 19).

Of course Wimber always had the back up reason ready if nothing much happened, as he told the delegates more than once that if they got too religious or stirred up, they could stop the process. Also, as in extracts 4 and 5, if they were not tuned in or not able to be aware of the power and presence of God in what was happening, they would not be able to participate fully.

In some of what Wimber said during this conference there was significant indication that he did not understand all that was happening himself. Sometimes this appeared to be more simply that he did not know what was going to happen next, for example, he indicated that he was leading the delegates forward into territory unknown to them by saying, "We're going to ask him to give us direction" followed by "He'll [the Spirit] give me direction in a moment" (Appendix 1, p. 3), so he set himself apart and expected to receive the direction himself, again reinforcing the subject positionings of the old worldview in the delegates. At other times, for example just prior to the second clinic, he sounded confused and vulnerable. At the start of this session, a testimony had been given from a woman who felt she had been healed from injuries which had left her wheelchair bound (Appendix 1, P. 16). During the clinic preamble Wimber sounded as though he was having an intense conversation with himself whilst the delegates listened as he tried to figure out and fit what had occurred (a lady leaving her wheelchair) into his theology. This is expressed in the following extracts.

**Extract 40:** “As the leader you’re expected to have the answer a lot of the time, and this way you don’t have the answer” (Appendix 1, P. 16).

**Extract 41:** “Another aspect of this whole process is that it constantly leaves you in a state of being vulnerable, since you never really know the answer and you can’t formulate some kind of theological approach” (Appendix 1, p.17).

**Extract 42:** “You’re all the time on the edge of risk taking, about to look like a goon at any moment” (Appendix 1, p. 17).

He said, “I don’t know”, “I don’t have a clue”, “you never really know the answer” and “you can’t formulate some kind of theological approach” (Appendix 1, p. 17). There were significant inconsistencies in how Wimber responded to what was happening. He did not appear to feel in control of this particular incident and he sounded concerned as his theology could not contain the dilemma of people being both stuck in their wheelchairs, unhealed as yet, while someone else was able to get out of their wheelchair in the same room at the same time.

He was also concerned about how this might have made him look. He was concerned about looking foolish (p. 17) and that being on the edge of risk taking could make him “look like a goon at any moment” (p. 17), although he later adopted a phrase ‘I’m a fool for Jesus, whose fool are you?’. There was perceptible anxiety in this monologue until Wimber started to contextualise the previous events in terms of a creative Spirit and used Moses as, perhaps not the most apt example, as in the following:

**Extract 43:** “I do those things I have the impression to do – that is called risk taking ... Experiencing new dimensions of faith...I sense He was very creative. If Moses had waited for a biblical text before

he parted the waters, he'd still be standing there, because there was no bible then" (Appendix 1, p. 17).

*(Moses had in fact 2 verses before parting the waters, been instructed by God to do just that, so he was not being creative, he was obeying instructions.)*

Wimber then reminded himself that he had learned to walk in the Spirit and do more than he was trained to do (p. 18).

#### **4. 'What God Wants': God's Desires And Performance Discourse**

What God wants or is doing or what signifies the activity of God, together with other phrases claiming to interpret or understand what is happening in terms of power, the Holy Spirit or God crop up often in this setting. Leaders explain to their followers what it is that God is doing, or intends or means. The authority ascribed to them by their followers results in the statements they make not being questioned and so accepted at their face value. It is as though it is God speaking – a point made earlier in my thesis. Similarly, during the clinics at the conference Wimber frequently ascribed actions, intentions, desires, and claims to God and the power of the Holy Spirit. Some of these things are probably benign in nature, by that I mean that they in no way go against the known character and nature of God. We know God to be well intentioned towards us, loving, caring, communicative and so on, so when Wimber prays "We thank you Lord ... that you are anxious and caring and sensitive and loving and generous and warm" (Appendix 1, p. 3), no alarm bells ring. In fact Wimber was reflecting the tense atmosphere in the conference hall because he had announced that there was to

be a 'clinic', by suggesting that God was anxious as well, and then neutralised the anxiety with the rest of what he prayed. He had set up the situation by orchestrating the clinic in order for God to minister to them. Here is an instance of what Percy was suggesting regarding Wimber's charisma which "could be seen as being a nodal point of power conflation, in which God's power and human power are merged to the extent that Wimber's charisma cannot easily be distinguished from that of the Spirit" (Percy, 1996b, p. 51). The next extracts illustrate the close alignment of God's power and Wimber's power.

**Extract 44:** "Okay, the Lord is stirring me and He wants to do some healing now" (Appendix 1, p. 4).

**Extract 45:** "God is here and He's ready to heal" (Appendix 1, p. 6).

**Extract 46:** "There's somebody with a swollen abdomen and the Lord wants to heal you" (Appendix 1, p. 4).

**Extract 47:** "Well the Lord is here. He is here powerfully. He is here to do miracles" (Appendix 1, p. 28).

**Extract 48:** "He [God] wants to minister and bless your people" (Appendix 2, D Smith and Smith, 2011, p. 8).

The implication here is that implicit trust is required from the delegates, not so much in God, but in Wimber and what he had been telling them.

#### **4.1. What God Is Doing**

There are many instances both at the conference and in more recent times when leaders interpret what is happening and attribute occurrences to what God is doing to the power of God or the Holy Spirit. Linking phenomena either seen or

unseen to the stimulation, instigation or presence of God or the Holy Spirit without considering any other explanation for the phenomena, or ecstatic behaviour as Steven (1999) calls it, has the implication that either just because Wimber/the leader says so or because the setting is a Christian one, there can be no other reason for this behaviour or phenomena. The delegates invest Wimber with considerable power and authority, an implication of which is that all that is happening is orchestrated and is what God has ordained, so not open to question. There is a seal of approval. Sylvia tried to protest about her state of health as diagnosed by Blaine, but she was strongly overruled by both Wimber and Blaine who persisted in praying for her 'female problem'. Wimber clearly stated, "Well the Lord is healing you" (Appendix 1, p. 9). She was in a very difficult situation. Who would have the self-assurance to step away and leave the stage? The atmosphere was charged and there were hundreds of people watching this demonstration.

**Extract 49:** "He said I had a female condition and I don't know whether it's healed or not. I don't know what it is. Wimber said, "Well the Lord is healing you. Can you feel that energy?" (Appendix 1, p. 9).

The next group of extracts illustrate where God is said to be doing something, giving words of knowledge, lifting their faith, causing physical signs, singling people out and so on.

**Extract 50:** "Lets get you to pray for some people ... I [will] give you some instruction. We're going to give several words of knowledge. I'm only doing this to help the healing process...God gives them because it's a faith lifter. It'll help the people that you are praying for to believe that they are going to be healed, because

they know that God, by supernatural means has pointed them out” (Appendix 1, p. 13).

**Extract 51:** “The Lord has engaged them ... this man is in tune with God ... God is touching them. We are ... allowing it to go on...” (Appendix 1, p. 10).

**Extract 52:** “whom God has singled out and begin ministering to them, interesting things begin occurring” (Appendix 1, p. 6).

#### **4.2. This Is God Or The Holy Spirit**

In the same vein, leaders interpret what is happening in terms of the power of God or the Holy Spirit. The observable phenomena are explained as being the power of God or the Holy Spirit. That there might be other explanations does not seem to be considered. The following extracts are some of the instances where these interpretations are evidenced.

**Extract 53:** “it’s the healing power of God” (Appendix 1, p. 7).

**Extract 54:** “Blaine could be heard saying to Sylvia that the Lord is going to heal her condition right now, and that she could feel the power of the Lord coming over her right now” (Appendix 1, p. 8).

**Extract 55:** “That is the power of God rippling over her right now” (Appendix 1, p. 8).

**Extract 56:** “See then power of God...Look at the power of God on her, power just rippling up and down her body. That’s miracle making power...That’s power man...That’s the kind of power that raised Jesus from the dead, from the grave” (Appendix 1, p. 14-15).

**Extract 57:** “I just had her open her hands because I could see the power of God coming down her body and stopping again and again” (Appendix 1, p. 7).

**Extract 58:** “He said I had a female condition and I don’t know whether it’s healed or not. I don’t know what it is. Wimber said, “Well the Lord is healing you. Can you feel that energy?” (Appendix 1, p. 9).

There are many further instances too, when the interpretations are couched in terms of what is happening being because of the love of God for the person/people. This in turn looks like receiving 'ministry' for ministry's sake that is, just for a nice feeling. I am not suggesting that it is the lot of Christian people not to feel nice, but as one of the leaders in Steven's study said to his congregation during a ministry time, "If you would like to receive ministry with laying on of hands for the assurance of that love which God has for you, I remind you to come forward and receive that special ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit" (Steven, 1999, p. 183). So the message is, God loves you, He will minister to you for reassurance. This may make you shake, wobble, fall down or behave in other 'weird' ways. These congregation members were taking up subject positionings of neediness and immaturity, but they are encouraged in this by their leader who suggested that the people come forward for ministry. Keeping the congregation needy reinforces the position of leadership and also, the more people who come forward the more successful the leader looks and feels. There is a considerable degree of control being exercised here by the leader as he tells the people what God will do, that the phenomena being exhibited should not be the cause of any concern but are signs that "the Spirit is moving and ministering to them" (Steven, 1999, p. 185). A further level of reinforcement of phenomena from leaders is when they 'bless what God is doing'. During Smith and Smith's seminar they said, "when you see the Spirit of God on someone, you just bless it, you don't have to do joined up prayers" (D Smith and Smith, 2011, Appendix 2, p. 6). This sounds as though there need be no effort put into discerning what is happening, no matter what it is, the leader uses their subject position of authority

to bless what God is doing. Wimber certainly did this on many occasions. In the 1985 conference, he used this phrase, “Lord, we don’t know what you want to serve us but we’re ready for whatever you want to do. We bless you, we thank you for what you’ve been doing among us” (Appendix 1, p. 30). This phrase is most frequently used when there is nothing specific happening, so it seems to me that when a leader cannot verbalise explicitly what God is doing, they can ‘bless’ what they see and this has the effect of endorsing any phenomena as the work of God or the Holy Spirit and themselves as retaining a degree of control over the situation. Wimber, explaining why he looked for phenomena when praying for healing, said, “when we recognise God’s healing power is on the person for whom we are praying, we are able to bless his presence and pray for more power” (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 232). He went on to say that if the Lord was honoured in this way, usually He would do more. It is a struggle to find any scriptural basis for this kind of thinking surrounding the requests for more power, heat, presence and so on.

## **5. ‘Directing God?’: A Controlling Discourse**

The following extracts can appear confusing as Wimber *asks* for the Holy Spirit, but then says what the Holy Spirit *will* do (He’s going to come/He’s going to do that).

**Extract 59:** “I’m going to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to overwhelm you, to come upon you, and He’s going to come upon you” (Appendix 1, p. 39).

**Extract 60:** “So I’m going to ask Him [the Holy Spirit] to come and He’s going to do that” (Appendix 1, p. 40).

**Extract 61:** “Stir up our hearts O God for the honour of your name. Just pour into this place Holy Spirit. Come, come Holy Spirit...now!” (Steven 1999, p. 187).

There are issues highlighted in these extracts with the way Wimber appears to control when and how the Holy Spirit comes or what he wants God to do. Whilst he said he prayed and made the request to God, he also stated that God was going to comply with the prayer or the prayer was that God would do as asked at once. Benn and Burkill (1987) say in their critique of Wimber’s teachings that it seemed fashionable to command God and claim answers which may not be in God’s loving will to grant. A balance should be grasped. Believing that God *can* do it now is not the same as God *will* do it now. “Jesus prayer, ‘Not my will but yours be done’ is the greatest and highest prayer we can utter” (Benn and Burkill, 1987, p. 8). It can often look as though God was expected to prove Himself by performing to order. Judson Cornwall talking about this issue, though not in relation to Wimber said, “faith is often not taught as a divine enablement that will reveal God and His kingdom to the believer; it usually is projected as an energy that can force God to obey the commands of the practitioner. Faith as I have heard it declared on the lecture platforms deifies man and humanizes God” (Cornwall, 1981, p. 12).

Wimber said, “What if He does nothing? That would be weird” (Appendix 1, p. 19). But Wimber does not, in reality, contemplate that possibility. But the question must be asked when, following this kind of commanding prayer and responses do occur, what is it that is happening? Steven (1999) suggested that the prayer ministry leaders and their congregations could be in some kind of

symbiotic relationship where the congregation had an understanding that prayer for an increase in God's presence, power, or what He was doing could convey a wish from the leader for an increase in 'ecstatic phenomena' (as he called it).

**Extract 62:** "After the initial 'Come Holy Spirit' prayer – 'Increase your presence', 'increase your power', 'more of your power', 'increase what you are doing', were typical phrases that the leaders used to address God during the prayer ministry" (Steven, 1999, p. 189).

He compared one service where there was little evidence of 'ecstatic phenomena' and where the leader prayed often for an increase with another, "where there was a riot of ecstatic behaviour, there was only one request for an increase in power" (Steven, 1999, p. 189). The way the leader prayed for further divine action resulted in a positive response from the congregation, the increase in noise supposedly signifying an increase in the power of God's presence. Congregation and leader can then endorse each other and it would be hard to know what part God had to play, if any, in what was occurring. Leaders explain and interpret phenomena as being the work of the Holy Spirit or of God, and so 'more phenomena' is taken to be a sign of more of God's power. This kind of "high degree of control consciously exercised by the leaders over the action of God" (Steven, 1999, p. 189) is still exercised today as leaders state that they have taken the delegates to the place where (they say) God wants them to be and they then instruct God regarding what He should do and where He should be (to stay in the room) as in the next extract.

**Extract 63:** "We've taken you into that place where God wants you to be. [Prays] More, more, bless them. Turn up the heat. Pray that

they get what they came for – get their money's worth...Stay in this room. Increase your presence...More. Have your way, increase your presence, bring healing, change lives" (Appendix 2, D Smith and Smith, 2011, p. 6).

The words 'come Holy Spirit' constitute a kind of starting pistol for the people who 'know' how to respond once the phrase is uttered. As we have seen, there is most often a preamble prior to the gun going off, summarising what could happen. This is in addition to all the stories that have previously been told and the atmosphere being charged with anticipation and expectation. Wimber, for example, announced that there was going to be a clinic and then told the delegates what he expected could happen with them such as, they could do weird things or have manifestations of the Spirit. He also told them that God was going to give them an initial experience and not to be afraid of the emotional responses. Once people had been chosen for prayer on stage, any phenomena such as looking pink, heavy breathing, wobbling or swaying were attributed to the power of God rippling over them.

**Extract 64:** "I believe that before you leave this room you will have the manifestations of the Spirit" (Appendix 1, p. 40).

There are also examples of much more specific instructions being issued to God regarding where the power was needed. Why Wimber and his team did this is not explained, as one would imagine that God did not really require any help with regard to where any healing power should be directed.

**Extract 65:** "More Lord, here right to the base of the hip. There it goes" (Appendix 1, p. 21).

**Extract 66:** “Clear down the spine now Lord” (Appendix 1, p. 21).

However, to claim that you can see what is happening at the base of the hip and say, “there it goes” adds to the authority and leadership credentials that Wimber maintained and reproduced continually, even though very often there is nothing to be seen with the naked eye. Wimber would, of course, say that these things could only be seen with your ‘spirit eyes’.

## **6. ‘Phenomena’: A Discourse Of Mystery**

I have established that the purpose of the conference was to equip the saints, to teach the delegates how to pray for the sick. To outward appearance, by explaining and demonstrating Wimber was doing just that. But as I have shown, Wimber was a master of contradiction. As Percy said, “the charismatic leader is able to dominate by naming the goals of belief and realizing them. If they are not achieved, the goal posts can be moved or the results reinterpreted” (Percy, 1996a, p. 62). The number of times that Wimber alluded to the presence of physical manifestations of power in terms of rippling, spasms, flickering and so on, which as an observer of the videos was, at the times he was pointing it out, really not visible, in any event it was far outweighed by the number of times he asked the delegates if they could see the Spirit ministering, energy, see what we are seeing, the power on this person, when there was nothing any different to be seen.

**Extract 67:** “Can you see the Spirit of God on his face? The flickering, that is an involuntary muscular spasm which the autonomic nervous system responds to the presence of God” (Appendix 1, p. 11).

In extract 67 Wimber implied that the involuntary spasm which he attributed to the autonomic nervous system is exclusive to the presence of God so the spasm could only have one cause. Physiologically, this is not really accurate. The human body is responding constantly to multiple stimuli, and flickering, as with any other physical reaction cannot be attributed solely to one cause. The following extracts show examples of Wimber attributing what he said he could see to the power of God. Although there were instances of people, looking pink in the face, breathing more heavily and wobbling so that they needed a chair, these signs were at least plainly visible. On the video, at the time these extracts were spoken, there was really nothing that could be seen happening with the person he was referring to. As I have said before, Wimber’s predictable answer to not being able to see would be due to deep entrenchment in the old worldview and untrained spirit eyes.

**Extract 68:** “See then power of God ... Look at the power of God on her, power just rippling up and down her body. That’s miracle making power ... That’s power man ... That’s the kind of power that raised Jesus from the dead, from the grave” (Appendix 1, p. 14-15).

**Extract 69:** “You see the energy on her body?” (Appendix 1, p. 7).

**Extract 70:** “Can any of you see what we are seeing on her?” (Appendix 1, p. 7).

**Extract 71:** “Now can you see the power of God on this man? And you see in the energy on his body? That spasming that’s going on is involuntary. It’s just power.” (Appendix 1, p. 8).

**Extract 72:** “Can you see the energy on these two? ... Can you see the energy on these two?” (Appendix 1, p. 10).

**Extract 73:** “Can you see the hands moving?” (Appendix 1, p. 36)

**Extract 74:** “You see the Spirit of God is ministering to her” (Appendix 1, p. 8).

At no point was there any explanation about what it was they should be looking for, and then Wimber would admonish them for not moving out from the old worldview, their limited awareness and not being tuned in that would keep them from ‘seeing with their spirit eyes’. At the same time he said,

**Extract 75:** “Now what we are trying to do is teach you how to see the Spirit of God” (Appendix 1, p. 11).

But actually he did very little to achieve that. He claimed to be able to see power, energy and the Spirit which most other people were unable to identify, again thus elevating himself in his subject positioning as the charismatic leader and reinforcing his followers in their inability to learn what he claimed he was trying to teach them. He could do this most of the time retaining his good humour and with seemingly endless patience, only very occasionally showing any frustration. This would have the effect of almost making him sound parental and so the delegates like children being persuaded. There were several of these strategies, used knowingly or unknowingly which served to keep everyone in their positionings and maintain the gap between the leaders and the followers.

Wimber very effectively retained an air of mystery regarding the phenomena of energy, power and the presence of the Spirit of God. By positioning himself as the interpreter of what was occurring, he could say whatever he needed to say and it could not effectively be disputed. No one present knew any differently. By 'seeing' the phenomena, he was also effectively keeping the atmosphere spiritually charged. For training purposes, there was little so far for delegates to attend to in order to learn how to pray. Any manifestations there were, heavier breathing, wobbling and a pink face were directly attributed to the power of God (Appendix 1, p. 7 - 8). In my opinion, this is naïve because these appearances can be caused by other means and it seems unwise not to consider the other reasons why people may start to breathe heavily, go pink in the face and start to wobble. Twitching muscles, eye movements, change in skin colour around the face, change in breathing patterns are all cited by Paul McKenna as being common external signals of an altered awareness (McKenna, 1993, p. 17) and there are no Christian connotations in those situations. People in high emotional states of distress and anxiety can exhibit these signs. As Percy said in his study of the Toronto Blessing, discussing the possible role of abreaction and natural experiences receiving a spiritual interpretation, in his note "My observation of hypnotists like Geno Washington suggests that phenomena like speaking in tongues and religious experience can be induced through any medium that delivers an altered state of consciousness" (Percy, 1996a, p. 53).

It is also of interest to see how Wimber reacted to the delegate who must have responded to a word of knowledge in the third clinic, as he was on stage.

Wimber asked him if he could feel the power of God on him and he replied that

he could not. Wimber checked with the person next to him, Joseph (another delegate), with the closed question, "you can feel it can't you?" (Appendix 1, p. 36). Going back to the first man, who still said he could feel nothing, Wimber said, "that's fascinating" and after spending a further short time with him, Wimber moved away leaving Joseph to stay with him. It was as though, as Wimber was not getting a response that pleased him, he almost did not have time for him. Wimber then offered some kind of explanation which effectively laid the responsibility for the apparent non-reaction with the delegate by saying that he thought that the man was very uncomfortable being there, but had prayed that he [the delegate] would relax a bit. He then said that he felt a surge of energy going from himself to the delegate and bouncing right back against the "force of resistance". Wimber continued that he thought the healing would happen over time and that he had done all he could. So rather than investigating the cause of the resistance (and it was never made clear as to why he had come for prayer in the first place), Wimber appeared to reject him (although he charged Joseph with looking after him), and moved the goal post so that there was another explanation, ensuring that everyone knew that there was 'energy' so whatever went wrong, it was not due to Wimber being unable to summon the power of God.

## **7. Conclusion**

What does the preceding analysis have to do with the practice of one to one prayer ministry? The practice was what Wimber stated that he was teaching, that he said every Christian could learn in the context of healing the sick. He expected that this practice should be used for evangelistic purposes, that people

should find their salvation because they witnessed a power encounter of some kind. But even in those days the practice almost immediately became confined to Christian people. As he taught them to practise on each other, so in the main, they continue to do so. (More recently 'prayer on the streets' has increasingly been undertaken by Wimber Vineyard churches, but not to the exclusion of 'ministry time'). Ministry Time occurs at virtually every Wimber Vineyard gathering and if Smith and Smith are anything to go by, they "try and train our leaders to understand that we should never meet together and not have ministry time. We should always have ministry time whenever there is opportunity for it" (D Smith and Smith, 2011. Appendix 2, p. 3). There is no reason for this except they say that not only do they study the Bible, but also 'do the stuff'. "Read the word and do the stuff". They continue, "We do ministry time because that's what God asks us to do" (p. 4). They offer no indication regarding how individuals are to know that is what they are asked to do. It is an example of the very powerful leadership style which is exerted in this setting, that statements like this are made and seemingly accepted by the seminar group (this was the Vineyard National Leaders Conference 2011, so the delegates were in positions of leadership, maybe not high profile, but not congregation members only). During ministry time, individuals may receive prayer ministry, which can initially entail as Smith and Smith put it, a whoosh moment when individuals are encouraged to come forward and be blessed in this way, to receive a touch from the Holy Spirit (pp. 4-5). As the ministry time develops, words of knowledge become a feature. Wimber talked a lot about people being singled out for healing by the operation of words of knowledge. Although many words were given at the 1985 conference, mostly by either Wimber himself or Blaine, there was little obviously done to

match those who came with the word of knowledge, so how people were actually singled out as they suggested is very difficult to determine. Again this goes unchallenged, and similarly in 2011, learning to receive words of knowledge entailed God being expected to give words for this purpose. As the clinic progressed the words of knowledge seemed to be put aside and phenomena or manifestations of what was interpreted as being the power and presence of God became more prominent. Individuals were prayed for according to what signs there were apparent to Wimber or Blaine. As the one-to-one ministry started, Wimber alluded to the Five-Step Model, but had not explained it at that point, but Blaine conducted an interview of sorts with the first lady he selected, Sylvia (though only to ignore its apparent outcome, as discussed earlier!). All this was done within the supernatural worldview discourses framework. Whatever came to light or whatever was done came from within this paradigm. The impact of interacting in this setting was that all interpretations would be in terms of the supernatural. Human responses or reactions were not seen as such and the only part of the supernatural spectrum that is considered is that of God and the Holy Spirit. The presence of evil is only considered in the context of a power encounter where the power of God meets the power of Satan in an individual and deliverance is required (J Wimber and Springer, 1986). It was seen in the example of Sylvia, that what she knew about her condition was ignored, she was prayed for regardless. She tried to reposition herself (in social construction terms) but she was manoeuvred back into the ignorant, just not getting it subject position. Not only was she in the presence of two strongly charismatic leaders who said they were getting messages about her state of health, but she was being watched by hundreds of delegates. It would have been extremely difficult

for her to assert herself any more than she did, so she remained very vulnerable and relatively powerless in that situation. I would suggest also that any phenomena Sylvia exhibited were hyped up somewhat which reinforced the leaders charismatic subject positioning. As can be seen, they were not open to any challenge, as Sylvia found out. She did exhibit some phenomena, and was left to 'stew'. Also, a couple of times, Wimber seemed to have a little fun with her, almost teasing which would have had the impact of keeping her on the back foot. He used closed questions to establish for himself how she felt and her stumbling was a source of amusement. That was interpreted as 'just being power' (Appendix 1, p. 27). So Sylvia was used, not just for prayer demonstration purposes. She did know that she would be in that position and be watched, but once on stage, she was used to demonstrate the 'power of God' powerfully enough for her to be unable to stand. She was pushed into a mould where Wimber and Blaine could say and do almost anything and she was rendered powerless to stop it. They were right and she was wrong to the extent that the way she was standing with her hands folded was stopping the flow of God's power. Wimber's charismatic leader subject position was continually reinforced during this encounter. What she was expected to feel was suggested to her by him. Blaine 'tuned her in' to what was happening, maintaining her subject position of ignorance and lack of awareness. The supposed presence of phenomena retained its air of mystery as it just could not be seen. As an example of one to one prayer ministry, although at the end Sylvia said she felt fine and was glad she came, the maintenance and reproduction of the identified subject positionings was clearly demonstrated.

Another interesting and significant episode from the video footage is the case of Charlene, another example that was clearly portrayed (Appendix 1, p. 20). As she responded, Wimber chuckled and said “hallelujah”, which would have acted as affirmation to her from Wimber. She was reacting correctly. This time, Wimber then directed God to the base of the hip and clear down the spine and then confirmed – “there it goes”. She was swaying and breathing deeply, and then started to whimper. Wimber interpreted this reaction as signifying ‘getting deeper’ and that there was a lot of hurt and pain inside. He broke the power of anger in Jesus name and asked Charlene how she felt. “Wonderful”, as she described feelings of electricity in her body. As she said she had one more spot, Wimber and Blaine’s prayer at this point was a cover all – speaking to ‘this’, breaking ‘its’ power and commanding ‘it’ to lift. They did not know what ‘it’ was and were not troubled by finding out. Wimber walked away telling Blaine to ‘hold her up!’

Really then, Wimber and Blaine could have things any way they wanted. There were a variety of interpretations or phenomena, or none at all. As Wimber and Blaine describe and interpret what they saw was occurring, it would be difficult to argue differently. The summary Wimber gave following the most recent sequence of events was not actually accurate regarding what happened. He told the delegates what he wanted them to see and understand, albeit with his usual good humour. The delegates receiving prayer ministry were not expected to participate proactively at all (except to manifest the signs appropriately) and took no responsibility for their part in any of their difficulties. Things were just ‘done to them’.

I will explore the implications for current practice of prayer ministry in my concluding chapter.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This study of Wimber Vineyard prayer ministry – power praying – has sought to present a balance, rather than a tirade of negative views. I have been concerned to look at reasonable arguments that go beyond ‘feeling’ or ‘knowing’, a sense of ‘rightness’ or feeling something ‘is of God’. My explorations have been centred around the question of what meaning does responding in Wimber Vineyard prayer ministry have for not only a responder, but the prayer minister, leaders and observers in the congregation also?

The practice of this one to one encounter in the context of prayer ministry is as yet little explored. The concept is mentioned fairly often, for example (Albrecht, 1999, Cartledge, 2003, Hunt, 1995, 1997, Middlemiss, 1996, Parsons, 2000, Percy, 1996a, b) and Steven have explored the dynamics of ‘ministry time’ (Steven, 2002). My study has looked at what can happen between the individuals involved when engaged directly in the prayer ministry encounter, that potentially catalytic event which is the focus and validation of all that has gone before and which is designed to be the culmination of most Wimber Vineyard events. I have gone on to examine possible implications for all individuals involved.

In order to do this I have given an account of the variety of themes and perspectives which have fed into Wimber Vineyard, have contributed to the in-house concept of prayer ministry and actually culminate in prayer ministry. Once prayer ministry is done, everyone goes home. It is the pinnacle of all the activity which precedes it. The way prayer ministry occurs in Wimber Vineyard is distinctive of this tradition, and perhaps even unique to it (E Mumford, 2012). Christians of course, pray for each other in multiple settings and for many reasons, but the Wimber Vineyard method was developed largely by Wimber as he started to formulate his model of prayer ministry, so that all Christians may be trained to heal for the sick (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 181).

I wish to acknowledge my own influences and experiences which have without doubt had an impact on what I have written and how this research has been done. Not least, my experiences have been important enough for me to undertake this study. It is probably obvious that many of the things I have come across have not seemed positive to me. It could easily be said that because I work as a psychotherapist who is a Christian, I might be more likely to attract those prayer responders who have had problems as a result of engaging in prayer ministry and so would have a more negative experiences. But I do not wish to ignore the fact that very many people have found prayer ministry a most positive experience which has done them nothing but good. Many have testified to the affirming effects of a prayer ministry encounter. Vineyard UK, New Wine and Soul Survivor publications and websites circulate testimonies and accounts of people attending events, engaging in prayer ministry encounters with positive effect. Typical examples are,

**Extract 1:** "... Not quite sure what God did yet – but something broke and was made new" ("My Event Highlights", 2012, p. 8).

**Extract 2:** "... I just felt truly blessed and empowered by the Holy Spirit and still feel so. A wonderful day" ("My Event Highlights", 2012, p. 8).

**Extract 3:** "... I came away completely filled and refreshed to get out there again, praise God" ("My Event Highlights", 2012, p. 8).

**Extract 4:** "Yesterday whilst praying for others I began to sense God's presence coming and empowering his people. People were connecting with God everywhere and the environment was so filled with the Holy Spirit... I realised that it is often easier to be blessed when you bless others. I am so happy to feel precious to God..." (SoulSurvivor, 2009)

Just as it could be said that I would mostly meet people who have issues with prayer ministry, by the same token, Vineyard, New Wine and Soul Survivor are unlikely to publish anything other than positive testimonies. So I might conclude that some people feel they are genuinely helped by this ministry even if others are troubled by it.

## **1. Summary Of Thesis**

I have traced some of the key relevant aspects of church history over the time since renewal became a feature for many Christians, to show how themes from that time have influenced prayer ministry. I have shown too, how the theme of renewal was carried through from one movement to the next. The concepts of spirituality and renewed Christian living have been taken up and modified as they were adopted into each movement. Also I have also traced how Wimber

Vineyard found its niche in the wider church context at a time when Christians were feeling increasingly anxious about diminishing spiritual and numerical growth. Strategies which had in the past raised the profile of Christianity, both nationally by staging large scale missions featuring well known and trusted evangelists like Billy Graham and Luis Palau, or more locally often with younger evangelists and musicians working in schools, engaging in street evangelism and higher profile events, all of which would have culminated in an 'altar call' which gave people who attended such activities the opportunity to respond and be converted to Christianity were no longer as effective. Along with the ongoing work of most churches, these special activities would result in additional people being fed into the life of local churches. The use of these strategies, both local and national came to a point where they were just not cost effective. I worked in an evangelistic youth organisation at the time where these anxieties were discussed often. Fewer people were being converted using these methods and together with rising prices, the cost of staging a mission became prohibitively expensive and the churches were less easily able to host such events.

At the time of this perceived crisis in the wider church body, Wimber was introduced to Christians in the UK by respected denominational church leaders. I have shown how David Watson, a loved and admired Anglican clergyman from York met Wimber in America. David had been diagnosed with cancer, and this made the whole process more poignant. It became well known among Christians that Wimber and his team were very involved in praying for David's healing and as I have mentioned earlier, there was confusion, sadness and controversy when David died. David Pytches, Vicar of St Andrews Church, Chorley Wood; Sandy

Miller and Nicky Gumble from Holy Trinity Church, Brompton, London were all involved, together with Douglas McBain from the Baptist Union who organised the 1984 UK conference (Kay, 2007, p. 168). The UK church was ready for something new and although Wimber and his approach were not embraced by all, his teaching and ways of working at the very least, stimulated a lot of thinking and challenged many assumptions about how effective evangelism might be done.

### **1.1. Influences**

I have shown how the manner of Wimber's conversion, his Christian journey and those who Wimber was influenced by have also had an impact on how prayer ministry is practised. Wimber was aware of the supernatural and had an intuitive way of working right from the start (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 44, 1992, p. 8). He fast tracked himself, learning as quickly as he could. He drew on and was influenced by others, again something that had happened right from the start of his ministry development (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 83). For seven years following his conversion he was on staff at Yorba Linda Friends Church having led "hundreds of people to Christ" and at this time he said he was leading several Bible studies a week involving over five hundred people (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 83). Four years after this found him on the staff at Fuller Theological Seminary having been asked to found a new Department of Church Growth. This appointment allowed him to travel extensively, teaching principles of church growth during which time he was also introduced to many other denominations, growing churches and ways of practising Christianity. Whilst at Fuller, he

interacted with other faculty members, learned from them and read avidly as he started to put his own theology together. He gained a theology of the kingdom of God mainly by drawing on G. Eldon Ladd; a theology of signs and wonders and demonology from C. Peter Wagner. He learned about worldviews from Charles Kraft and more about church growth from Donald McGavran (J Wimber and Springer, 1992, p. 85). In 1977, following separate times of personal crisis for both Wimber and his wife Carol, Wimber said, "I realised that God was bringing me to a place where I was open to the supernatural work of God in my life. I was beginning to see that there were reasons why he could heal today" (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 5). At this point, having become disillusioned with the church whilst travelling extensively as a church growth consultant, Wimber returned to the pastorate and started a church in Yorba Linda which became Vineyard Christian Fellowship, and over the following months his continuing interest in charismatic gifts and praying for the sick led to Wimber's first healing success. He said, "The period of gestation was over; the healing ministry was born in me ... God used *me* as a vehicle of his healing mercy" (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 69,70). There is further demonstration here as well as in the analysis of how Wimber took healing to himself. He was the healer and the first healing was his. He then said, "shortly after I saw my first healing, I asked myself, 'is it possible to develop a model for healing from which large numbers of Christians may be trained to heal the sick?' I thought the answer was 'Yes'", (J Wimber and Springer, 1986, p. 181). Then he seemed to ask himself how this could be 'marketed' more broadly. In chapter 5, I have discussed in detail the way this model was applied and practiced.

In addition, I have discussed the influential time Wimber spent with Lonnie Frisbee, who introduced Wimber and his church to signs and phenomena. They subsequently travelled together all over the world performing signs and wonders until the extent of Frisbee's problem lifestyle became clear to Wimber and they parted company.

## **1.2. Structure And Content Of Events**

I have argued that the threefold structure of a Wimber Vineyard event prepared the congregation for and culminated in ministry time and prayer ministry. I continued by expanding on the subject of worship in more detail, focussing on how engaging in Wimber Vineyard worship is a significant preparation for ministry time and prayer ministry. I noted that the language and rhetoric used during these times is a significant feature in Vineyard communication.

I have not addressed the teaching/instruction part of a Wimber Vineyard event and apart from saying that, although I have not done a statistical survey of the very many podcasts available of Wimber Vineyard preaching/teaching, it is my impression that it is rare for any current teaching (for example, E Mumford, 2012, D Smith and Smith, 2011) or instruction not to mention something John Wimber said or taught on the subject in question. In fact, the service I described earlier in my thesis is one of those rare events where Wimber was not mentioned.

I then focussed on ministry time in general and some issues surrounding this practice which have an influence on why and how ministry time and prayer

ministry occur in the manner that they do in Wimber Vineyard. Again, the use of language and rhetoric are significant. I have discussed 'expectation', a concept that is almost a pre-requisite for ministry time and prayer ministry, and other concepts such as that of 'being well all the time' and others embraced by rhetoric such as 'doing business with God'. I have explored the Five-Step model and the more contemporary New Wine Prayer Ministry Guidelines. Some of the issues which arise from these are words of knowledge, manifestations and phenomena, inner healing and demons. I have also discussed the reactions from prayer ministers and leaders should nothing appear to happen in terms of signs and phenomena, healing and so on following a prayer ministry encounter.

I have also discussed the concepts around how meaning is attributed to experiences. By this stage in the study, it was very clear that rhetoric and experiences were two dominant features in Wimber Vineyard.

### **1.3. The Analysis**

The analytical part of my study then focussed on the adopted language, the many sayings of Wimber which remain in common usage today, and the rhetoric and idioms which created a style of communication strongly associated with Wimber. I used discourse analysis to explore video recordings (available on YouTube) of a conference held in 1985 where Wimber taught the material that was published in *Power Evangelism* and *Power Healing*. I identified six discourses which I explored in detail and illustrated with extracts not only from the conference recordings, but other supplementary and more contemporary material. What had

become plain by this time was that little had changed in the way Wimber Vineyard conducts itself in the present day from the time when Wimber was alive. So although the main volume of material and data I used was twenty five years old, there would be very little difference in my analysis if I had used more contemporary data because, as I have said, so much of the teaching and instruction that is delivered at current Vineyard events plainly draws on the work and teaching of Wimber and if not reiterating what Wimber said, is reminiscent of it.

#### **1.4 The Impact Of Wimber's Influences And Teaching**

How do the teachings of Wimber and the influences he came under appear in the prayer ministry one to one encounter? The discourses identified as part of the deconstruction of Wimber's teachings revealed the following; 1. Science and Knowledge: a supernatural worldview discourse, 2. Expectation and Suggestibility: a discourse of anticipation, 3. Leadership: a discourse of charisma, 4. What God Wants: God's desires and performance, 5. To Direct God: a controlling discourse and 6. Phenomena: a discourse of mystery. These discourses have an impact on prayer ministry and all these concepts are in place to a greater or lesser degree surrounding and integrated into the practice of ministry time and prayer ministry.

The concepts embodied in the discourses identified all form a part of the prayer ministry encounter. Leadership is exercised in the encounter by the prayer minister as they take up the role of acting as an intermediary between the prayer

responder and God, receiving words of knowledge and other communications from God for the responder (discourses 1 and 3). Both parties will have been in an atmosphere where the preceding activities of worship and teaching will have rendered them suggestible and looking for phenomena (discourses 2 and 6) which has the effect of reassuring them of the presence of God. The prayer minister may ask God to heal whatever has been revealed or whatever is deemed appropriate for the responder but then will proceed to pray in such a way where it seems as though God is expected to perform or fulfil the request in order to validate Himself. This is done against the philosophy that this is what God would want (discourses 4 and 5).

A significant challenge now is to tease out the right from the wrong, God's power from human power, to not abandon personal responsibility to think and discern; to test the spirits and not to give up on Christianity and faith altogether as for example, Derren Brown says he has done in describing himself now as an atheist. In an interview with Brown conducted by Chris Addison broadcast on Radio 4, Addison asked regarding the atheism, "You weren't were you? You were an evangelical Christian". Brown replied, "Happy clappy, the whole thing, yes, full on". He continued to explain that when comparing how healing worked for a psychic healer friend with how healing worked within Christianity he found it to be much the same except that Christianity was a bit more institutionalised. They went on to talk about Brown's television programme, *Miracles for Sale*, ("Miracles for Sale") where Brown trained an ordinary person to be a faith healer. He discussed how his past as an evangelical 'happy clappy' Christian informed the construction of the programme. He claimed that he had not made the

programme to be against Christianity, the church or belief, but because faith healing was just “a scam done in the name of God that really was nothing to do with God at all ... I was aware that so many of those things in those happy clappy churches were so much about crowd dynamics and about group hysteria and things that were nothing to do with out there, it’s just human behaviour; you get people in a group and whip them up” ("Chris Addison interviews Derren Brown")

It is crucial that genuine, impacting prayer ministry (God’s power) does not become the rather less attractive and more controlling ‘power praying’ (human power) which I have identified as a challenging potential outcome of the Wimber model of ministry. Prayer ministry is a genuine facilitating the work of God in someone’s life as instructed in the Bible. Power praying is when humans take over, innocently or otherwise and use human abilities and crowd dynamics in the name of God, when in fact it has nothing to do with God at all. It is the accurate attribution of what is happening that will give prayer ministry integrity and genuineness, thus minimising hurt and harm to those who engage in the encounter, whichever role they occupy.

## **2. Attempted Methods Of Study**

I have wondered why it is that the prayer ministry/power praying encounter has not been explored thus far. Some of the reasons that could account for this are integrated with the fact that it was very difficult to get those involved in Wimber Vineyard actually to discuss their experiences in person. There would seem to be an apprehension, especially on the part of a prayer responder, concerned with

examining their experience. The reason for this can only be speculated about, because possible participants are reticent even to say what they feel about participating in any kind of study. Earlier in the process of undertaking this thesis, I had tried to encourage prayer ministers and responders to participate in a survey about the experience of prayer ministry but got so little response that this strategy had to be abandoned. I have also tried in several different ways to gain access to those who engage in prayer ministry. There was either no response despite going through someone with whom I had a personal friendship, or a response from a church leader stating how busy he was and that it would be months before he could give the matter of arranging access to some members of his Vineyard congregation any attention, again despite going through a church member as an intermediary. I also had direct access to more substantial numbers of prayer responders where over one hundred written requests for help with a questionnaire were handed out which was met with a very disappointing response, rendering that method of research unusable. Not only was there minimal response from prayer responders who were approached to ascertain their willingness to participate, but reaction from church leaders was 'avoidant', put at best.

Added to this scenario I can note that most of the academically-based explorations of Wimber Vineyard, from whatever perspective, have been undertaken by those outside of Vineyard. Wimber's theology has been critiqued (Benn and Burkill, 1987, Hunt, 1995, Hunt et al., 1997, MacArthur, 1992, Middlemiss, 1996) and phenomena, ecstatic behaviour and manifestations have been investigated by (Hunt, 1997, Osborn and Walker, 1997, Percy, 1996a,

Porter and Richter, 1995, Steven, 2002), but engagement in a prayer ministry encounter appears to have been accepted with little comment so far. It is in this situation, in my opinion where the individuals involved are rendered most vulnerable to each other. During the public part of ministry time when words of knowledge may be given, they either come from the leaders or are most often 'checked' by leaders if they come from congregation members (Steven, 2002). (I have discussed the nature of words of knowledge and plainly cannot discount the fact they are a significant part of ministry time.) But in the one to one encounter, the parties are left to 'check' their own words of knowledge. If what is occurring does not resonate with a prayer responder, or they just feel that it is not helpful, stopping the process can be really quite difficult unless the responder is very assertive, as was seen in the case of Sylvia and Wimber in the analysis part of my thesis (my p. 226).

### **3. Thoughts On Words Of Knowledge From Questionnaire Participants**

Although the questionnaire I prepared was never used in the context of a proper survey and cannot be given any credence because of the dearth of participants, the responses I did get may offer a small contribution which could possibly be developed later. I received seven responses from people who acted as prayer ministers to a questionnaire which included three questions about words of knowledge. I asked about both receiving and checking the use of words of knowledge. There were of course, a range of responses. The most common means stated for a prayer minister to receive a word of knowledge was through thoughts or pictures of things that were not previously known to them together

with a strong sense that either God was in it or it was what they needed to pray for. The most common criteria used by the participants to be assured that a word of knowledge was from God was, was it scriptural; did it match/line up with/not go against scripture? Some participants also suggested that the 'word' should make sense and that it should feel 'right'. Another check was that the responder would react positively or it would resonate with them and they felt released to make changes. For one participant, it was that the word of knowledge came from outside themselves, the assumption being that it must therefore be from God.

The questionnaire explored distinguishing between words of knowledge and either insight, intuition or accumulated experience. The most popular check made by participants was that a word of knowledge would be heard by the prayer minister as something they would not have thought of or it was unexpected. Some participants recognised that responders might hear common sense or experience conveyed by a prayer minister in the encounter as though it was a word of knowledge because of the effect it may have for them.

These responses highlight that the same words may have different meanings for those individuals involved. For example, a prayer minister may be aware of drawing on cumulative experience in what is being said in a prayer ministry encounter, but the responder interprets it as a supernatural intervention, a word of knowledge from God. I have had this experience myself in both Christian settings and in my private practice where most of my clients have no personal experience of Christianity. I have been told by Christian responders that what I have said constitutes a word of knowledge for them. They are mostly unwilling to

hear me explain that what I had said came from an accumulation of knowledge and experience, despite this not making it any less a work that God was doing in their life. They would rather term it a word of knowledge! I also have had private clients who have thought I must have x-ray eyes as I reflected back to them in the normal process of counselling, and that those reflections fill in the gaps a little as I recognise the gist of their story. Often, they have already told me the things I reflect back to them but seem astonished to hear them coming back to them from me. They seem surprised when I say that I have only repeated to them what they have earlier told me. The counselling process 'knows' the impact when people 'hear themselves' via another person for the first time. For me, the same thing is happening, my experience enables me to recognise quickly the gist of someone's narrative and so when I feed it back to them, they feel I 'know' more than I have been told. For the Christian, this can be spiritualised and referred to as a word of knowledge. For someone who is not a Christian, I have 'x-ray eyes'.

I am not suggesting that there is anything malicious intended and that prayer ministers would not take great care when giving or offering what they believe to be words of knowledge, but actually they have very little way of knowing what is happening themselves except by measuring against their own feelings and the reactions of the responder. Some words of knowledge cannot be measured up against scripture if they are about personal information and similar matters.

#### **4. The Scourge Of Psychology?**

I recognise that I am not just dealing with theological and psychological theory, but with a lived-out faith where individuals try to assimilate their spiritual experiences, attitudes, teaching and so on. The sense I have had is that there is a fear at the prospect of examining and exploring personal, spiritual experiences, particularly with the use of psychological tools and methods which would, for many prayer responders especially, apparently only serve to spoil or contaminate their experience which is something they do not seem prepared to risk. They hold their experiences dear (which could be part of the concern). These fears are not formulated or necessarily conscious, so people can become defensive if being asked if they would be willing to explore their experience constitutes a challenge for them. Watts said, “we are aware that there is sometimes suspicion of psychology in the church. This stems partly from the fear that psychology is always trying to explain things away, reducing them to a mere matter of psychology. This anxiety is misplaced. Our approach here does not imply that Christian ministry is ‘just’ a matter of psychology. It is clearly much more than that, but it always has a psychological aspect (Watts et al., 2001, p. 13). Argyle, addressing the conflict between science and religion suggested that there is little support for the argument that psychological explanation of beliefs implies that the beliefs are false. He said that, “the role of psychology now is to help understand rather than to undermine” (Argyle, 2000, p. 14). Pargament has also addressed the issue of the anxiety and tension between psychologists and religious communities and asked the question, why? The concerns of the respective communities are the same but the disciplines have become rivals. In the past

religion had been the source of establishing the meaning of phenomena, but Pargament said, this has now been redefined as 'natural'. Psychology has become thought of as an alternative to religion because it offers other ways of looking at the world and solving problems. It can help people achieve control in areas of life where control has been lost. Religion (and I would say Christianity) helps people appreciate what they cannot control "through frameworks of belief that go beyond oneself" (Pargament, 1997, p. 8). Religion also encapsulates the act of surrendering – allowing God to flow through, so "an appreciation for the limits of human agency lies at the heart of religion" (Pargament, 1997, p. 8). There are times when people must look beyond themselves for answers. Psychology on the other hand, "can offer ... important insights into the footprints left by religion. These insights ... help us to understand its manifestations and consequences" (Pargament, 1997, p. 10). "Religion has the potential to help people through their hardest times and it also has the potential to make bad matters worse" (p. 10). For Pargament, the visible phenomena of most interest to study are in short supply. Psychologists can listen to people praying, watch them reading the Bible, witness the experiencing of a variety of emotions and notice interactions, but much remains private and subjective. There is a need to view from the outside and the inside (p. 11). Pargament's thoughts resonate with the frustrations I have felt during the process of this study. With better focus and investment in building relationships, I am sure that more could be achieved in terms of using the tools which psychological research offers to investigate the life that is within Wimber Vineyard churches in order to develop some meaningful criteria which might help distinguish between human power and God's power at work.

## **5. Why Do People Have Experiences?**

Professor Richard Wiseman has been investigating the psychology of the paranormal for twenty years, and rather than attempting to disprove the existence of paranormal activity, has considered it more worthwhile to investigate why it is that people had experiences of the paranormal (Wiseman, 2011, p. 3). Wiseman explained that since seeing another psychologist (Dr Susan Blackmore) on television who suggested that rather than looking at the genuineness or otherwise of paranormal experiences, exploring what was happening for those who claimed to have experiences of the paranormal was of more interest. It is this perspective that Professor Wiseman has investigated. I am not studying the paranormal, but there are many similarities between what he has researched and the way that I am investigating. Proving or disproving signs and wonders and so on or just settling for the dualistic possibility that everything is either demonic or of God has been unsatisfactory for me. So, maybe, rather than trying to work out the reality or sources of phenomena or ecstatic behaviour, like Wiseman, could it be more worthwhile to explore why it is that Christians want to have these experiences and not be willing to entertain the idea that many of the phenomena that occur, take place between people just as human activity if the circumstances support it? This idea does not, for me, exclude God at all, as God, after all is the author of our creation and therefore created the facility that humans have to communicate on many different levels. For many Christians, it is almost as though if phenomena did occur between people, it would be assumed to be evil in origin and should be rejected, just as evil should be.

Wiseman has shown that participants who believed in the paranormal were more susceptible to suggestion than those who did not believe; for example, believers incorrectly reported movement of stationary objects and were more likely to experience paranormal phenomena (Wiseman et al., 2003). There is a principle here, so rather than focussing on the subject matter of the paranormal, it is the behaviour of the participants that is the focal point, that is that they believed. Believing made them more susceptible to suggestion and therefore to seeing things that did not in actual fact happen.

I have shown in my analysis that suggestibility is a significant factor and that when people are told what will happen to them, especially if they are in a euphoric state, and believe what they are being told, then they are more likely to perceive what has been suggested is what actually happens. I am not discounting the presence of God, but it is possible that some of the phenomena experienced by some people may be that which they wish to experience and it is brought into being in themselves. Percy, although he was writing about the Toronto Blessing said, "There is, I think, a clear relationship between the rhetoric deployed and the subsequent phenomenology. Believers sing about the power and intimacy of God, hear testimonies of it, listen to it preached, and then finally get to experience it for themselves, In effect they reap what they sow" (Percy, 1996a, p. 37). As I said earlier in my thesis, the invocation 'come Holy Spirit' acts as a cue for 'behaviours' to commence. The leaders facilitate "manifestations of power to be unleashed" as they use the right rhetoric (Percy, 1996a, Steven, 2002).

I have laid out how these things have come about and where there may be issues, that if given a little more awareness and attention, would be less potentially harmful. My journey through exploring and examining feelings and experiences has shown me that greater personal awareness, far from contaminating precious experiences, expands on what can occur but in a more conscious way that gives individuals more control over how and what they participate in. This way of thinking would though, most likely go against the grain in Wimber Vineyard where leaders encourage their congregations to be open and let themselves go and in addition, not least, it would appear that if ministry time and prayer ministry were not shrouded in mystery, phenomena and manifestations, and it was possible to apply logic and understanding, awareness and sense to prayer ministry then the chances are, it would be thought that, to use a piece of Wimber rhetoric, 'God [would not be] in it'.

Having undertaken this exploration, I am tending towards assessing that much of what is occurring is more human in origin and outworking than divine. I most certainly do believe that God can and does involve Himself with us, and intermingle with our efforts to make it easier for Him or to make it easier for us to connect with Him, or He just interacts spontaneously. My concern is that the efforts we make need to be recognised as such and attributed accurately. This would increase the safety of the individuals involved as they would make their decisions (and understand that they should make their own decisions) based on accurate information of any situation they were in.

I have addressed, what for me is a significant issue, that of individuals being expected to discard all critical faculties, any form of assessment about what may be happening and abandon themselves to the flow of the moment in order to buy into power evangelism and power healing (my p. 179).

## **6. Further Research**

There is much that can and should be done to investigate the practice of prayer ministry in terms of the effects on all parties involved. The first step would be to gain the confidence of the leadership in order to achieve some access to individuals who engage in the practice. From what I have done so far, my suggestions would be that data be gathered by using participant observation actually in situ, and to craft semi structured interview schedules in order to conduct a survey among all those who participate in prayer ministry/power praying. These could be used both with individuals and in focus groups.

It would also be helpful to establish some criteria in order to distinguish between power praying and prayer ministry and also to establish teaching in order to raise awareness of the issue among those who engage in the practise.

## **7. Spiritual Abuse**

One of my concerns when I started engaging in this study was the possibility of finding the occurrence of spiritual abuse. There have in the past been reports of abuses for example, *The Rise and Fall of the Nine O'clock Service*, *Harmful Religion*, *Ungodly Fear*, (Howard, 1996, 1997 , Osborn and Walker, 1997, Parsons, 2000). All these books are examples of overt spiritual abuse, but there have been no reported incidences like these for some time now. It is clear that lessons have been learned and guidelines for prayer ministry are in place as I have stated. There is no sign of rampant abuse although I have come across incidents related to me where leaders and individuals have crossed swords resulting in a parting of the ways, but this can happen in any church from time to time. I have mentioned how difficult it has been to engage with any who attend Wimber Vineyard with a view to having a conversation, or conduct a survey regarding their prayer ministry experiences. Maybe there are issues surrounding the exclusiveness of Wimber Vineyard personnel and their unwillingness to explore these issues in any other scenario but their own. I can only speculate about why it might be that Wimber Vineyard people do not seem to respond positively to any kind of outside challenge and those of us who observe, do just that, and rely on publications for our data. Wimber did have a policy of not responding to personal criticism. He said "I never write back" (Stafford and Beverley, 1997, p. 46). It could be that Wimber Vineyard leaders take their cue from that policy, but they are assuming that research is going to criticise. If there are issues that could be said to be in the arena of abuse, they probably surround the principle of lack of spiritual and personal awareness regarding how prayer ministry and power praying has developed. Encouraging followers to return countless times for more ministry will only serve to keep them dependent,

immature and fosters an addictive environment. There are some advantages for leaders to do this, leaders remain distinctly separate from the people and dependent, immature Christians do not cause too much challenging difficulty (they can be messy at times, but most mess is soon cleared up) and numerical growth is relatively easy. Could Christians in this setting be psychologically damaged by this process, needing psychotherapeutic help? Sometimes, yes, for example when healing does not occur, and also when human power is superseding God's power but the humans have no awareness that this could be happening. Also, being topped up regularly rather than bringing resolution to personal issues may not be in the best interests of an individual. Not all these things would warrant formal psychotherapeutic intervention, but I would suggest that possibly damage may be subtle way and over a long period which would make it difficult to recognise. This is an area that needs to be explored and addressed.

Many Wimber Vineyard leaders are identified and trained 'in-house' and do not undergo any formal training and education in mainstream church leadership as Anglican, Methodists and Baptists do for example, where they are taught about the dangers of keeping congregations dependent, and not only that, it does the congregation a disservice not to invest more in their growth and maturity.

## **8. Proposals**

Studying Wimber Vineyard and immersing myself in so much of their material (though I could have done more!) has shown me that a great deal of current Wimber Vineyard's raison d'être is what John Wimber did, said and thought. Not only are his catch phrases quoted very often, but just about every teaching, seminar and sermon is based on something that he said or did. It is as though they are trapped in Wimber's world and really cannot get out of it. There is no indication that they wish to. Many times material delivered today is more or less how Wimber would have said it. In many ways, without losing any regard for Wimber, some consideration might be given to moving beyond their founder. Wimber died fifteen years ago – had he lived longer, I am sure that other developments would have come about. Carol, his wife has reported that “concerning the Vineyard, John used to always say that an outpouring has about a twenty year lifespan. The hinges will get too much in cement and we'll start building monuments to ourselves. He said, “I don't expect us to be any different”” (C Wimber, March 30, 2010).

In what must have been one of the last interviews he gave in July 1997 regarding his retirement, Wimber discussed whether his hopes for Vineyard had been realised. He said that whilst he would give a high grade for worship and the reintroduction of intimacy, they had not been as evangelistically effective as he had hoped but they had planted very many churches and grown more than 1000 per cent in their first decade (Stafford and Beverley, 1997). This is a very interesting comment from Wimber as his stated reason for using signs and wonders was for evangelism. So somehow it would appear that the focus shifted from that given in the earlier days of Wimber and Vineyard.

The future of Vineyard UK has been discussed among their leadership and in March 2011 John and Eleanor Mumford (National Directors) issued a letter outlining “the vision that we feel God has given to us as a movement for the next ten years. 1. Keep On (Legal and Financial). 2. Build Up (Church Development). 3. Press Forward (Church Planting)” (VineyardChurches, 2011). These are very broad brush strokes for outlining their future vision. There is only the obvious there and no detail on how particularly the building up and pressing forward might be done or how things might look as those things take place.

Maturity in adherents should be encouraged to prevent dependency on ministry time and repeated prayer ministry which incorporates receiving words of knowledge by the prayer minister, so that prayer responders learn to hear God themselves and do not consider receiving words of knowledge and the like as the pinnacle of experience that God has for them. There is an implication for leaders here – potentially fewer numbers of people will need to respond during ministry time. Thus the immediately tangible results of their ministry may not be so evident for them. Perhaps leaders should examine in themselves how and by what means they receive affirmation of their positions and ministry.

In the light of the concerns I have expressed which have come from sincere clinical and professional observation there are some areas to which I would suggest that Wimber Vineyard prayer ministry teams and users might give attention 1. Rhetoric. The language and turns of phrase employed really need to mean something more specifically identifiable in order for participants to be

better able to cooperate with what is being said. 2. Dependency. Rather than encouraging frequent visits for more prayer ministry, recruit some skilled personnel who can spiritually facilitate those with problems face them and resolve them appropriating the saving work of Jesus on the cross into their lives. 3. Leadership. Some reflection on practice especially what is required from leaders to see their congregations become spiritually mature rather than remain dependent. 4. Experiences. Be prepared to examine the place experiences have and re evaluate their meaning and significance to everybody. Faith is only really faith when there is nothing to be seen or heard.

## **Appendix 1**

### **John Wimber MC (Mission Class) 510 Signs And Wonders Course**

**Transcripts of the four identifiable clinics contained in the video clips available on YouTube.**

I have transcribed this material as accurately as possible. It is not always word for word, sometimes because the wording on the recordings were not easy to hear clearly and sometimes because when Wimber was apparently speaking, not using notes, his meaning was not always immediately plain, so I have written the sense of what he seemed to be communicating. Some appropriate description of what appeared to be happening is also included. There is bound to be some personal interpretation of these actions implied in the way I have made my observations which I readily own. Other observers may easily interpret what was occurring differently.

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## **First Clinic**

### **Session 3/12**

#### **Programme 3, part 3<sup>34</sup>**

Wimber: "We are going to do a clinic, lay your stuff down. In our Western civilization we have had a propensity for preoccupation for all study and knowledge. We have equated the gaining of knowledge with power. We recognize that those that know, rule. Throughout the Western world pursuit of knowledge has resulted in the ruling class. Those that are knowledgeable rule. We know that instinctively, we know that by precept, we know that by example in the church today we have been conditioned to the same value system. The church today is worldly, is westernised. We're so secularised with almost completely eliminated the supernatural from our perceptions. We have come to a place where we don't anticipate God to operate as God among us. We've come to a place where we really think that the pursuit of study has become an end in itself, which is a good thing. It's not a bad thing to study. This book [the Bible] is important, it is the foundational thing. But to study it without acting upon it is incomplete. Both Jesus and James told us that hearing without doing is incomplete. Jesus came as the Word of God, He came from God it became incarnate and spoke the words of God for all humanity for all time to know the heart of God and the will of the Father. The words then illuminate the hearts and the will of the Father. If you study Jesus' words you can understand and you can have illumination of the heart of God. But the works illustrate we not only need the illumination, we need the illustration, we know the word and the works. To

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<sup>34</sup> Wimber, J. (1985b) **3/12 Programme 3 Part 3 Power Evangelism** [online]. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFE3\\_jUslyY&feature=mfu\\_in\\_order&list=UL](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFE3_jUslyY&feature=mfu_in_order&list=UL) Vineyard Ministries International [Accessed March 1 2011]

say 'I love you' and to do nothing about it is an incomplete statement. To say 'I'll pray for you' and not to pray is incomplete, to say that Jesus heals and not pray for the sick is incomplete, to say that Jesus saves and not witness to the lost is incomplete. To say that God is God and Lord of all things and not operate as though he is God and is Lord is incomplete. We have been inconsistent in many of our patterns and practices in the history of the church.

What were about to do is invite the Holy Spirit to come. We're going to ask him to come and minister to us. We're going to ask him to give us direction, we're going to learn to move this week with the Spirit of God. What the Spirit does we're going to do; He is the leader. I never know when I ask God to do these things, what He is about to do. There was a day when I worried about it. Now I don't worry about it any more. It's so much fun. I like to watch people do weird things, because I like what happens to them afterwards. It's not so much the process, as the benefits that occur afterwards in the process that I like. So let's pray and invite the Holy Spirit to come that the word and the works may become one."

Wimber prayed. "Father, we love you and we thank you for your presence here today. We have sensed you here all day hovering over and in this place. We thank you Lord that you're like a bridegroom waiting for the bride, that you are anxious and caring, and sensitive, and loving, and generous, and warm, and that you know every single human being that is in this place and every need that they have. And so Lord, we invite you to come now to come and minister among us demonstrating your love and care, ministering whatever ministry you want to O God. We are your children, we come to your table, we know you set a

sumptuous table, and so here we are Lord. And we invite you to come now in Jesus name, amen”.

Now just wait on the Spirit. He'll give me direction in a moment. Don't get too religious, just relax. If you stir yourself up too much, it stops the process,”

He waited... approx 40 seconds

Wimber: “Okay, the Lord is stirring me and He wants to do some healing now. He's giving me some words of knowledge, He has given me a couple and has given some of the others of you some also. What I want to do is speak two or three of them and pray for some people. And then we can go on to dismiss and all of us pray for the rest of them. Someone has a condition in the right side of their nose, it's right from here down to just above nostril. It's internal, swollen and quite painful on the right side of the nose. There is also a male here, who has herniated testicle, and it's really quite painful and it needs healing. There is another male who has another condition in the left shoulder down the neck. It's down the neck and cross the shoulder and it's quite painful. I don't know the full circumstances, but I can feel the across the back of the neck and the muscles are drawn and you're very tight. Or it may be me? There's somebody with a swollen abdomen and the Lord wants to heal you. Blaine, has the Lord given you any other words? Why don't you come and give those.”

Blaine: “There's also somebody here tonight who has pulled a muscle on the inside of their left thigh. It's a male. There is also somebody who has a mastoid infection. They've been having a lot of drainage on the left side of the throat, it's causing a lot of irritation.”

Wimber repeated this as Blaine had no microphone.

Blaine: "Also, somebody with partial blindness, a blind spot in the left eye."

Wimber: "Left eye, blind spot, upper left side of the left eye. What is that – about 7 or 8? Let's do this, all of those who have those conditions, will you come up and let us pray for you? The rest of you can sit down for a few moments."

There was a pause while the people come up and Wimber asked them to line up on the stage facing the delegates.

Wimber: "Normally in a clinic situation, we would never ask people to come up for us to pray for them, we're begging your pardon tonight, we're wanting to pray for you and minister to you, we're also wanting to train them in how to pray and minister. So forgive us if it's a bit embarrassing thing for you to be prayed for in public, but tough!" They all laughed. "We don't have any other way to do this thing. We're going to pray for these, but before I begin praying I want to tell you one or two things. First of all there's a sort of a natural pecking order in our society. We would normally start here on the left or you would minister to the ladies first and then work your way down the line, with a natural process that you follow, is that right? Is that what you would anticipate, some sort of a healing line that you would follow on? Well operating in what we would call a supernatural perspective, we don't do that. When we turn and look at the group of people like this, we are looking for indication of the Father's working on an individual. And

when we see, either through distinguishing of spirits or natural means the Spirit of God is already moving on somebody, that's the first person that we're going to go and minister to. And we do that because of a basic assumption, because we should do what the Father is doing. Now first of all, anyone that is up here is probably being ministered to by the Father, that is why they are here. We've had words of knowledge, the supernatural revelation about their condition. Of course, there is always a possibility of a mistake on one of their parts, they may have heard wrong or thought we said something else or could be any number of combinations. But even if they they've come up here misunderstanding, it is quite likely they're going to get healed, because God is here and He's ready to heal, and He's ready to heal those who we haven't had a word of knowledge about. So we are not worried about the success of the exchange. What we're looking for is whose first according to God, got it? Now once you begin moving with those whom God has singled out and begin ministering to them, interesting things begin occurring. Other people become engaged in the process. The Spirit of God, begins stirring them and they become prepared, and then you know who's next and who's next and then who's next, and then you'll see us moving up and down around the line. Why have they taken this long with this person, not that person. We take each one as God gives us direction.

You will generally follow a procedure that we will clarify more in the next few days. We follow a five-step procedure which helps us in the process of praying for the sick. The only time we bypass that procedure is when the Spirit of God tells us something before we even get to the person. If we do that, we don't have

to bother with the procedure. The procedure is only helpful when we need help. We just do what God gives us to do. Are we in tune?"

Wimber asked Blaine to pick someone.

Wimber: "Blaine is going to start praying and I'm going to be the commentator. He is interviewing her asking her what her condition is, making sure that he understands, you notice what he's doing with his hands". (I observed that Blaine was copying what the lady was doing with her hands, indicating to her neck). Her name was Sylvia (her name badge was visible). He was asking her if she felt power on her.

Wimber: "Can any of you see what we are seeing on her? There's quite a bit of energy moving over her body already. It's the healing power of God. All that Blaine is doing is helping her get in tune with it, to realise what is going on. Often we're not conscious of what is happening to us." Blaine had his hands on either side of her face/cheeks. Her eyes were closed. There was nothing else observable on the screen. Wimber went over to her and asked her to unlock her hands which she had folded in front of her.

Wimber: "Sometimes when people have their hands folded it acts as a protective circle that will stop healing. It's a way of feeling safe. I just had her open her hands because I could see the power of God coming down her body and stopping again and again. You see the energy on her body? Believe me, he (Blaine) is not jerking her around. He is trying to hold her up." Sylvia had her

eyes closed and she appeared to be breathing a bit more heavily and she looked a bit pink in the face. She was staggering a little bit and moving about slightly. Blaine had got his hands on either side of her neck by her cheeks. She was wobbling a little more. Wimber asked for a chair for her. She collapsed into the chair. Blaine could be heard saying to Sylvia that the Lord was going to heal her condition right now, and that she could feel the power of the Lord coming over her right now.

Wimber: "We do not practice intentionally, the ministry of being slain in the Spirit. We don't think there's any advantage to people falling down. Sometimes, when we pray for people they get in a state like she's in. If Blaine had not been holding her she would have fallen, and she would have been there for quite a while. That is the power of God rippling over her right now." Sylvia's head was falling back and forward. Blaine had moved away from her and she was just sitting in the chair. Blaine had moved onto another person.

Wimber: "We are not ignoring her. It's like a pot, it's got to stew for a while, you've got to let it. You see the Spirit of God is ministering to her. He doesn't always need an agent. Okay, we've done our part, and now it's just allowing the Spirit of God to do His part. Now can you see the power of God on this man? And you see in the energy on his body? That spasming that's going on is involuntary. It's just power." Blaine prayed with the man. He had his right hand on the man's abdomen. The man had his hands just out from his sides. His eyes were closed and he was quivering. Blaine was speaking to him. What he was saying could not really be heard as he was not using a microphone. Wimber then

asked the people in the line to step back about two feet. So the man and Blaine were bit more isolated looking on the stage. Blaine had moved his hands to this gentleman's head, one hand on his forehead and one hand round the back of his neck. Wimber turned his attention back to Sylvia. Sylvia was not wearing a microphone and so at times it was only possible to pick up the gist of what she was saying.

Wimber: "Are you feeling pretty good?" She smiled. "You feel rested?" She said her shoulders were jerking and he said, "How come?" She said, "I don't know. I'm just happy." He said, "You're not mad with anyone?" She said, "No." She said she loved everybody. He asks her if she wanted to sit there for a bit longer, she said okay but she stood up. She stumbled a little bit, and looked unsteady on her feet. Wimber said, "Give me your hand so you don't fall down", she stumbled again and he laughed. The delegates laughed and Wimber said, "That's okay, it's just power. When she took a hold of my hand, energy went through her and through me, and it's just the power of God. Now Sylvia, he prayed for you for a neck condition? Sylvia said, "Yes and a sinus condition." Wimber said, "Sinuses as well. And it's draining down the back of her neck, and from her ear." Sylvia said, "All through the service I was choking and trying to hear." Wimber said, "Okay. Did he also pray for some female problems?" Sylvia said, "He said I had a female condition and I don't know whether that's healed or not. I don't know what it is." Wimber said, "Well, the Lord is still healing you, can you feel that energy?" Sylvia was still wobbling a bit. Blaine had returned to Sylvia and stood on the other side of her. He asked her to put her hand on her abdomen and he put his hand is on top of hers. She said, "I just feel..." (inaudible). Blaine said

something to her, which was also inaudible, he seemed to be telling her what she was feeling. He then asked her to put her hands under his on her lower abdomen, she closed her eyes. Wimber said, "There you go, there you go." He was laughing. Blaine was talking to her, but it was inaudible. Wimber repeated what Blaine was saying, "I speak to this affliction in the name of Jesus. I speak to this affliction."

Wimber: "He is speaking to some internal organs and Sylvia is not particularly aware of any kind of problem but it is something that the Lord keeps speaking to Blaine about to pray for. Can you see the energy on these two? I know it is some distance for many of you. But can you see the energy on these two? Now if we were praying in our back room or in someone's living room or something, we might take an hour or so, to pray over them and ask for further direction or information. We're allowing them to stand here, the Lord has engaged them. Can you see that this man is in tune with God? God is touching them, we would be interrupting them if we stopped it. All we're doing is allowing it to go on, because God hasn't spoken to us. If God speaks to us, we'll either stop it or the Lord will speak to him. It's just a season of this you know and then it's over, okay? And notice what's been going on back here. See this young man in a red jacket. Remember the eyes are the orifice of the soul, and sometimes when we're moving in the spirit realm, the Spirit of God will contract and contact someone else. Can you see that happening here? Now look at the lady, the same thing is happening with her and all it is, is that operationally, they are yielding to something that they can feel happening in them. Nobody up here is unconscious. They can all hear me, if I asked them to, they could all put his

hands down she could move if she wants to, they're voluntarily just allowing the Spirit of God to minister to them. And so they are not in a hurry to get it over with. That's why I asked Sylvia. Do you like it like this, does it feel good? She says, it feels wonderful.”

Watching the video, Blaine was praying with somebody else and Wimber had gone up to another man and put his hand on his forehead. The man was swaying a little bit. Wimber said, “Of all the people up here Ed is the only person who I know personally, I know that Ed is very susceptible to the Spirit of God. Over the last year or so God's been using him in the healing of others as well as himself. And he has become very responsive to the work of the Spirit. Can you see the Spirit of God on his face? The flickering, that is an involuntary muscular spasm which the autonomic system responds to the presence of God. Now I don't want to prolong this too long.”

Then Wimber called forward several members of the team, because there were still a number of people on the stage who had come forward and he asked them to minister to those who were left.

Wimber: “Now what we're trying to do is to teach you how to see the Spirit of God. You watched us go through a chain reaction, we ministered first to a woman and then to a man then to another man, then to another woman and another man. And you can see the Spirit of God, at various levels of encounter with various individuals. Is it valid? You saw us go through a procedure. You don't know the procedure yet because I haven't given it out. But basically we

interviewed them and made a decision about how to minister.” One of the men sneezed, and Wimber said, “God bless you”, and then he called him forward as he was the second gentleman who was prayed for and said “How are you? How do you feel? Come here, what did he pray for? The man replied, “I have an inflamed ligament in my leg, for about 3 weeks now and I been seeing the doctor for about a week and a half.” Wimber said, “An inflamed ligament in the left leg. Is it painful?” The man replied, “Inflamed ligament in the left leg. Yes, it goes right up to my back. I was doing a lot of exercising and I had to stop exercising for three months.” “Is it painful now?” Wimber asked. “Yes, the muscle feels a little weird.” Wimber said, “Okay, how would you check to see if it has improved?” The man replied, “The pain would be gone out of my muscle.” Wimber explained, “Many times when we pray for people with conditions, the Spirit of God is still on his body. He's trying to hold himself still, he's trying to control it. He's trying to hold himself still trying to be casual, isn't it amazing? We have these protective instincts, we want to control things. The Spirit of God is still on him, the healing process isn't finished yet, but he got self-conscious and he wanted to get off the stage. I only called him back because I could see that the Spirit of God was still stirring him and I just wanted to take time to find out what the condition was and to give him what I would call some post-prayer suggestions.” He turned to the man. “What I would encourage you to do is to go and sit down and just open yourself to the Spirit, because that's probably going to go on all night and we will see how you feel tomorrow.”

He turned his attention to Sylvia, and asked her “How are you?”

“I'm fine.”

Wimber said, "You feel better do you, how does your stomach feel? Nose feels better, stomach feels better? You happy you came?"

"Yes I am."

"You don't want your money back?"

"No"

Wimber shakes her hand. "God bless you." She left the stage.

Wimber: "Alright, lets get you to pray for some people. Let's stand. I'm just letting you stand for a moment so that you can stretch, while I give you some instruction. We're going to give several words of knowledge. I'm only doing this to help the healing process. Okay, you really don't need words of knowledge to heal people but God gives them because it's a faith lifter. It'll help the people that you pray for to believe that they're going to be healed, because they know that God by supernatural means has pointed them out. Can you see that process? Alright, so I'm going to invite the Spirit of God to give us words of knowledge and we'll call them out. And then we want the people who have those conditions to stand right where they are in the crowd. Then I want those who are seated around them to gather round and pray for them so that you can begin ministering right in your neighbourhood as it were. Okay, let's pray. Father, we invite you now, by the Spirit to begin showing us those that you have singled out tonight to heal. In Jesus name, amen. Alright, you can be seated." Blaine came forward. He was not wearing a microphone so when he spoke it was not always clear to hear what he had said. Wimber would sometimes repeat what Blaine had said. "Tear duct condition, a lot of mucus in the morning. It's in the left eye, a tear duct

condition, who has that? You stand. Those of you around her, begin praying for her.”

Blaine: “There is also somebody with water behind one of their kneecaps. I think it’s the left kneecap.”

Wimber: “There’s somebody with severe headaches running down the right side of their head, and over the right shoulder, pain right through here. Who has that condition? Stand. Oh, two people back there. Then there’s three, then there is four people. There someone with spinal deformity in one vertebrae. You have other complications as a result of that. Debbie put your hand right on the vertebrae and pray for it. Speak to it, tell it what you want it to do.”

Blaine: “Someone with nodules on their vocal chords, there is a lot of rasping in your voice.”

Wimber: “Nodules on your vocal chords, lots of raspiness in your voice. A female with a swollen lymph gland under the right arm with pain that extends to the right breast, 27 years of age.” He looked across the auditorium. “Is that your family around you? Get someone else in there. I want to explain about immediate family. The emotional commitment to the individual is so high that it stops faith and I want to get someone in there who doesn’t know you. See the power of God on this woman, remember she had the vertebrae. Look at the power of God on her, power just rippling up and down her body. That’s miracle making power, you need that kind of power if you’re going to change vertebrae. Look at that. That’s power, man. That’s the kind of power that raised Jesus from the dead, from the grave. Ha ha! I like that.”

Wimber: "Put your hand right on the spot and tell it what you what it to do." The video shows pictures of delegates surrounding those who have identified themselves.

Wimber: "Lets all stand. Isn't it wonderful, don't you like this stuff? I never get tired of this stuff. People getting help. People getting blessed, getting healed, getting touched by God. I told you it wasn't safe to come in here. Let's pray Father, we rejoice in your goodness. We thank you for the life of Jesus. We thank you for the Word of God. We thank you for the works evidenced among us, we thank you for your presence, we glorify you O God. We look forward to the next few days. Move among us O God, teach us new things. Equip us for ministry."

The session ended.

## **Second Clinic** <sup>35</sup>

### **Introduction**

Immediately prior to Wimber starting this session, an empty wheelchair had been pushed onto the stage and a testimony followed, given by a young woman who had been injured whilst working hard to become a ballet dancer. Her injuries had become progressively worse but one day she responded to a television evangelist by touching the screen. She felt that her healing started then (some time before). It seemed that she felt that her healing had come to completion during the previous clinic. What follows appears to be Wimber trying to respond to what had occurred. He did not appear to be using notes so he is most likely thinking and speaking at the same time.

Wimber: "I was trained to do whatever I wanted to do or felt God wanted me to do and ask God to bless that. Bless us Lord for we are about to do something for you. I had no concept of having to wait until God spoke. Over the last seven years I've been learning to wait on God; it's hard to wait on God. It's because it's not natural. As the leader you're expected to have the answer a lot of the time and this way, you don't have the answer. God said, "don't start anything unless I tell you to start....", I think it's wonderful the way God takes somebody out of the wheelchair. But I don't like the way he does it, I object! It's too messy, is too noisy, too emotional, too awesome, too frightening, too risk-taking. There are people sitting in wheelchairs around the room now, devastated that God took her out of hers. Not that they are against her getting healed. They're hurt by the process; when's it is my turn? I don't know why God does it that way, I just know

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<sup>35</sup> Wimber, J. (1985a) **3/12 Program 3 Part 1. The Kingdom of God** [online].  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFE3\\_jUslyY&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFE3_jUslyY&feature=related) Anaheim Vineyard International [Accessed March 1 2011]

He does it. All I know is that if we don't expect Him to do things, He won't do anything. So we had to make commitments to study into opening ourselves, to grasping the full implications of what He's doing and how He's doing it to the degree that we can and then lay the rest down to Him. This is as much as I know or I think I know, and the rest of it I don't have a clue. But I like what happens to people when we live this way. Another aspect of this whole process is that it constantly leaves you in a state of being vulnerable, since you never really know the answer and you can't formulate some kind of a some kind of theological approach. 1, 2, 3. You take a deep breath and stand-up out of your wheelchair. It doesn't work like that. You can't do it with sternness in your voice. You can't use a pet phrase over and over and expect results, because the kind of ministry that you're experiencing this week is based on a different premise is not dependent on methodology. It is based on dependence on the Spirit and the Spirit is serendipitous, spontaneous, creative. He does things differently every time, and you have to learn to just yield without adding, to be used to the fact the other they looked totally foolish. You're all the time on the edge of risk-taking, about to look like a goon at any moment. I do those things that I have the impression to do, that is called risk-taking, learning the vulnerability as a learner. Experiencing new dimensions of faith. I don't see anything in Scripture that prohibits the Spirit from being creative. No, but creativity still has an order to it – it is not random. In fact, I sense He was very creative. If Moses had waited for a Biblical text before he parted the waters, he'd still be standing there, because there was no Bible then. Throughout Scripture there are incidences of an unprecedented move of God. You cannot depart from the Counsel of God if what you're doing is not firmly rooted in scripture, then you're in trouble. God is being

creative in the way that He leads you to do work. After all, we're working with the very creative entity when we are working with the creator of heaven and earth.

I am focused on doing his bidding. Most of us are confused by how to live the life of faith. We can't relate to the superhuman effort that it would take to do the things that Jesus did. I have learnt to walk in the Spirit and do more than I learned by the methodological means and the kinds of principles and approaches that I was trained in. The church can witness to the acts of God's kingdom, on God's kingly rule in the past, then in the future. The church, then, is the instrument of the kingdom. We are the people of the King. We're not the kingdom itself. We are His instruments in that the works of the kingdom are performed through us. Thus, the purpose of the church is to witness what God has done what He's going to do and what He is doing in the present. It is also to be the instrument through which God works on His purpose in the world. We have come then to do the will of the Father. But the Father's will, will be done on earth even as it is in Heaven. We need the word and we need the works, we need the illumination and the illustration of the fullness of the kingdom to be demonstrated,

#### **Session 4/12.**

**Programme 4, Part 2** The clinic starts at time point 0.36<sup>36</sup>

Wimber: "Whenever we come to this point, I just love it. The juices start flowing in my mouth because we're going to do some risk-taking. But I don't know what

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<sup>36</sup> Wimber, J. (1985c) **4/12 Program 4 Part 2 The Kingdom of God** [online]. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFE3\\_jUslyY&feature=](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFE3_jUslyY&feature=) Anaheim Vineyard Minisatrics International [Accessed March 1 2011]

God is going to do. What if He does nothing? That would be weird. What if I missed what He's telling me and we go in some strange direction? That would be strange too. What if I don't? What if I hear what God is saying and we do exactly what He wants done? What if? Do you see the adventure in it? Every time it's fun, every time it's exciting. It's predictable only in one respect, that God is going to take control. Okay, that's great."

Wimber: "Father, we thank you for your gifts of the salvation that is in Christ, and that that salvation covers the whole of humanity. Every aspect, so we lift ourselves to you Lord and ask for your direction, that you would move by your Spirit, showing that which you want to accomplish today. We ask this in Jesus name, amen.

Now we'll wait. Alright let's be seated. The Lord just gave me a word for a rather common ailment which is unique in certain aspects - that there's someone here with a sinus headache. I said, 'Lord, give me some more information'. He said, 'Well, this is a person who has had this condition for about 10 years'. I said, 'You mean a constant headache?' and He said, 'Almost constantly, 10 years'. He said, 'I want to deliver them of this condition today.' At that point I got rattled because we were talking microphones. But I wasn't exactly sure, but I think He told me it was a female. But I'm not absolutely sure about that. Has had a sinus headache condition for 10 years? Will you come?"

The delegates applauded as a lady approached the platform. She was called Charlene – her name badge was visible.

Wimber “Go over, Blaine is going to pray for you. Now, the Lord has told me that this is an afflicting spirit, all right? So we're going to pray. I'm going to let Blaine pray as the Lord directs him. I don't even know whether the Lord will confirm that, but I sense that this is what the Lord is telling me.”

Blaine was on the left of the stage, Charlene was standing about a couple yards away from him and Wimber was on the right-hand side of the stage. Blaine and Charlene were facing each other and Wimber was watching them. There was a pause, then Blaine went closer to Charlene with his back to the delegates and put his hands on either side of her face.

Wimber: “Keep your spirit eyes open, as things are happening already, the Spirit is moving on her already.”

There was no real explanation here regarding what the delegates were looking for, there was little visible to see on the screen.

Blaine was speaking to Charlene but he was not using his microphone so he could not be heard. There was a pause. Wimber was watching what was happening.

Wimber: “Remember, we must learn to see in the Spirit. You are now in that process. There are things going on, try to see what you're seeing. Your mind will resist it.”

Blaine had changed his position and had moved to her right side. He had his right hand on her forehead. He continued to speak to her. Then she groaned quietly, and Wimber said through a chuckle, “Hallelujah.” Charlene appeared unsteady and was wobbling slightly.

Not all of what Blaine was saying could be heard but I did hear “all the stress all the stress. More Lord, here right to the base of the hip. There it goes.” Wimber and Blaine were holding her arms either side of her, stopping her from swaying too much and falling.

Wimber said, “Clear down the spine, now Lord.” Charlene was taking deep breaths and still swaying. Blaine had his hand on her forehead again. Wimber said to the delegates, “See, you don’t have to talk a lot when you are praying.” Charlene started whimpering and Wimber continued, “See we’re getting deeper now. There’s a lot of hurt inside and pain.” Looking at Charlene, Wimber said, “Now we break the power of the anger in the name of Jesus.” Wimber asked her, “How do you feel? She said she felt wonderful.

Wimber said, “What does that mean?”

Charlene replied, “That means I’ve got electricity flowing through my body. I’ve waited so long.”

Wimber said, “You have electricity going through your body?”

She said, “That is what it feels like.”

Wimber said, “Does it go through to your feet?”

She pointed to her neck and said, “I don’t know, I kind of feel like I’m loaded.”

She laughed. “I don’t know what kind of terminology that is.”

Wimber said, “That’s theological, loaded. Most of us relate to that.” They all laughed.

Charlene said, “I’ve just got one spot on my neck.” Wimber put his right hand on the back of her neck and Blaine put his right hand under her chin and round on her right shoulder.

Wimber said, "Father, we just speak to this in the name of Jesus, I break its power. I command it to lift." Charlene's head fell forward, and then she looked up. Wimber started to walk away and said, "You hold her up Blaine. Now, what did you see? I'm asking you a question and I want you to record in your mind. What did you see happen just then? What did you see? You saw someone come up on the stage. We prayed for her. As she came up we gave you a few indicators of what we thought was the problem. God gave us a word of knowledge that she had had her condition for about ten years, pain through the neck, the back of the head and down through the sinuses, a constant condition. As we prayed for her, you saw degrees of release occurring, degrees of penetration. At one point, the healing process stopped momentarily and then we prayed again and then it began again. When it began getting inside to the emotional realm and pockets of hostility and anger and frustration, pain and fear were holding it up. That is what those eruptions were from and what you are seeing here is the releasing of a person here from inside out. You see the headache was symptomatic of something else. It wasn't the real problem, that is, what she felt wasn't the real problem. The real problem was a pain caused by a social problem and social area and Blaine is continuing to minister to her in another area. You'll notice that when we're praying, when the Spirit of God comes on her, they get woozy and sometimes they almost fall. We don't allow them to fall if we can help it. We will usually seat them or hold them up. We don't see any advantage to ministering to them on the floor, and we don't think it's a mark of our spirituality or theirs to fall down. We recognise that in some circles it is perceived that way. We're not trying to come off like the great men of God. We are just trying to serve a great God, and we're trying to do it in a way that is

accessible to you. So you can learn to do what we do, got it? I think you do, or at least some of you do, did you notice the involuntary spasming in the muscles of the face and the eyelids and all? That is somewhat narrative to the situation. Now Blaine is continuing to minister to her because I think he has the same impression I have, that there's a social, emotional dimensional foundation for this. That afflicting spirit has brought this work on her as a result of something changing back in her history, between her and someone else and that all of this came as a result of her getting hurt and angry, and he is dealing now, with further aspects of it and releasing her at other levels." Charlene was swaying considerably, and Blaine was having trouble holding her up. They got a chair, and she sat down.

Wimber: "Right, I think it's time for you to heal, you ready? Now a moment ago, the Lord gave me a strong impression that He has alerted a number of you that have tingling and energy and heat in your hands. Would you raise your hands if you have that feeling in your hands right now. Right, there's quite a few of you, I want you to stand, those of you that have this tingling heat and energy, right? Now all that is, is an unction or anointing that God gives from time to time to prepare you for ministry. It isn't something that you have to build a great theology on. Its just something we've observed, phenomena okay? and it will help your faith for a while, because when you sense that you have that unctioing and energy, you sense that God is here and He's going to minister through me. All I'm trying to do by getting you to identify it, is to recognise that that's an unction that will come. Some of you will receive that, some of you are receiving it since you stood. You will receive it again and again. I used to get it a lot when I first started praying for the sick. I hardly ever get it now, except when the Lord wants

to do it for others and then I suddenly get it and I know He wants to do it for others. Okay, now that you've identified yourselves, you can sit back down. We're going to give some other words of knowledge and ask those people to stand and I want those of you who received the unction to go over and help whoever it is. That is praying for the various individuals, and I want you as much as you are able to put your hands on the spot where they're incapacitated or sick, if at all possible or proper."

He said to Blaine, "Do you have any additional words?"

Blaine said, "There's someone here with a perforated left eardrum, that needs healing, good. There's also..."

Wimber interrupted and said, "Now, someone who had that anointing go over and pray. That's it, that's it."

Blaine: "There is also someone with a problem with the opening right at the top of their stomach. They've been having a lot of indigestion, with the sphincter muscle. Oh there's seven or eight of you. There is also someone with the tailbone where it goes inward. So instead of going down and going outwards, it goes inward, and it causes a lot of pain there."

Wimber: "A congenital condition but you've injured it in recent months, tailbone. Where are you?"

Blaine: "Okay, right back there."

Wimber: "You may not want to lay hands right on his tailbone." He went back to Charlene who was still sitting on the chair and said, "How do you feel? Are you all right, is the pain gone?" She pointed to her neck and said something inaudible. Wimber said, "Good you can go and be seated now. She said, "I've

waited so long.” Wimber said, “She feels like the girl in the wheelchair. It’s been 10 years and she’s waited for this.” The delegates applauded.

Wimber: “Someone with a splinter in their left elbow. The bone has been splintered. I can see it, I don’t know how to describe it. You’ve injured your left elbow.”

The camera moved to show a man with 3 people around him. Their hands were stretched out towards him and were shaking.

Wimber: “We gather round him and pray, one of you who has the energy make sure that you put it right on the elbow. There’s someone here too.”

Blaine: “There is also someone who has neuritis in their neck, it’s been triggered by a car accident. Is that you?”

Blaine pointed one-way, Wimber pointed another. “Great, great, right here in front of you guys. Yes, that’s it.”

Wimber: “People get around this girl now.”

Blaine: “There’s also someone with a cyst on the inside of their left thigh, who’s that?”

Wimber: “A cyst on the inside of the left thigh.”

The cameras showed others being prayed for, those who were praying had their hands up towards the person, not actually touching the people, but their hands were shaking.

Wimber: “Right there, right at the back.

Blaine: “There is also a man who has a hernia on the lower left side of his abdomen. In fact, you have to go into surgery, well the Lord wants to heal this, this morning too.”

Wimber: “Hernia, on the lower left hand side.”

Blaine: "Yes, the lower left hand side."

Wimber: "Where's that? Come on, you have to get up if you want to get healed.

Okay, back there. Okay, let me tell you what's going on between Blaine and I right now. We are receiving what we call words of knowledge, well the Bible calls them that also. Words of knowledge come through impressions in your mind, in your mind's eye. We see with our mind's eye. They usually come five different ways, those are the most usual or common. One of the ways is that we see it, we actually get a picture or as in the case of the elbow, I saw what looked like an x-ray of an elbow with a splinter sticking out of it out of the side of it, so, often we'll see it. Sometimes we just read it. We will see something like a banner written off the top of a newspaper. It'll sort afloat across the horizon; we can see it. It just goes and you just read it. So sometimes you see it and sometimes you read it and sometimes you just know it. Blaine gets those. He comes into a room, he just knows, he'll look at somebody and just know that he's supposed to pray for them and he will know what's wrong with them. I don't think I've ever received that impression. There are unique aspects to the gifts. Sometimes you see it. Sometimes you read it and you know it and sometimes you feel it. You'll feel sensitivity in your body, you'll feel pain. You'll be aware of an area of your body, and you know there's nothing wrong with you, it's because God is giving an impression for someone else." He looked across and said, "Someone got healed over there. And sometimes you speak it. Those of you that prophesy and speak in tongues will know what I'm talking about. It is not something that goes through your mind. You will just be speaking and it just comes out of your mouth. Sometimes in large meetings like this we get hundreds of these words, especially if there's a great deal of resistance or fear, the Lord will give us detailed accounts

of people, sometimes there are 15 or 16 pieces of information about an individual and what's wrong with them, and all that's for is to help them respond in faith, they really didn't need words of knowledge. All they needed to do was believe. That they couldn't believe so, God gave them words to help them at that time. So that's what you're hearing right now when we are giving these.

Blaine: "There is also someone here with 60% deafness in their right ear. It's a male, 60% deafness in your right ear, a gentlemen, over here, right here also, come on up.

This is hard to describe because I am seeing it as well as hearing it. In the throat, behind the sinuses, high in the throat at the base of the tongue is like a golf ball sized cyst, a tumour. You can feel it when you swallow. Its been with you for quite some time."

Wimber: "On the right side?"

Blaine: "Yes, in the throat but high."

Wimber repeated, "Who has that? You feel it in the roof of your mouth way up high."

Wimber: "While you're thinking about your tumour, I want you to bounce something up to your awareness. Do you feel the heaviness in the room? Can you? That's the presence of God, that is manifest presence. It'll get heavier believe me before the week is over. I'd like you to dial it up because most of you live unconscious of these kind of things. Some of you are looking at me and saying I don't feel anything. Well, the Lord is here, He is here powerfully, He's here to do miracles. And so be aware, because if you're not aware of the presence of God, you can never be aware of the power. Now there's a large number of you who need healing here today, there is something wrong with you.

I want you to stand. Anyone here that needs healing. Okay that's it. Hands up, how did so many Christians get that sick? The rest of you, I want you to stand and get into groups of twos and threes and pray for each one of these people, come on. Just follow the group around. Keep your hands up if you need to be healed."

Looking at the pictures it looked like the whole room of people were standing and milling about. There was the noise of lots of people talking and getting themselves organised. Both Wimber and Blaine were giving detailed instructions from the stage to help them get themselves sorted out as they wanted. The delegates started praying for each other. The prayer ministers there had adopted similar poses where they probably had one hand on the person they were praying for and another hand outstretched towards the responders or on their heads. Most of those shown who were being prayed for had their eyes closed, some had their arms out in front of them, palms turned up. The hands of some of those praying were shaking. After a couple of minutes the scene faded down and the clip ended.

### **Third Clinic**

#### **Session 5/12**

#### **Programme 5 part 3** Clinic starts at time point 0.38<sup>37</sup>

Wimber: "Let's stand. I want to speak from the context of my own heart. We have been in a very blessed state in the last two days. The presence of the Lord in our meetings has been incredible. Some of you have very limited awareness of that. You're really not all that tuned in yet. My hope is that it will be more so before you leave. I want you to know that I've been travelling around the world a long time in these kind of contexts, we have started in a place where most conferences end, where the power of God is manifest. Well, the Lord is encouraging me, He's got a lot more, He's not even tired." The delegates applauded.

Wimber: "Let's pray. Father we rejoice in your goodness, we thank you that we can come to the table that you have set and that on the table you have everything that you do and everything that you provide for your children, you have everything from salvation to healing, to deliverance to blessing to forgiveness to empowering. Everything is on the table for your children and we are aware that the enemy has been trying to keep us from the table for years. But we thank you for this day and this hour bringing us to the table, and we're grateful. Now Lord we don't know what you want to serve us but we're ready for whatever you want to do. We bless you we thank you for what you've been doing among us. We

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<sup>37</sup> Wimber, J. (1985c) **5/12 Programme 5 Part 3 Worldview** [online].  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJhjSM22hFI> Anaheim Vineyard International [Accessed March 1 2011]

honour you O God and we offer this occasion is time this moment to you in Jesus' name."

Wimber: "Right, let's be seated. The Lord is speaking to me about two different issues, I'm not grasping fully what He means, but I know that He has singled out some for healing. As far as we understand it that's the most accessible in the supernatural realm; we can move into that the easiest. It's been a tough journey for us but we found that it's the easiest to get to. There's someone here, a woman I think and there's something on the centre of the throat. It's either on the skin or under the skin and it's a kind of line going back to a kind of tentacle growing through here (he pointed on himself) or a scar. It must be on the right side. Does someone have that condition?"

Blaine: "It's cancer of the thyroid. He had the same word as I did."

Wimber: "Does someone have a diagnosed condition of cancer of the throat? We're ready if you are. Fear grips the room when the word cancer is mentioned. Cancer is frightening but I want you to know that under C's comes colds and cancer and God doesn't care which. It really doesn't mean that much to Him. He understands what it means to you but He is able to heal either just as easily. We are not all that worried about cancer although we have recently lost a dear friend to cancer. We understand the fear that grips people but it doesn't grip us. We also understand that it's so frightening to have it named in a public meeting like this that you can hardly move so we are just going to give you a few moments and then we're going to bug you".

Blaine: "There is someone here with an inner ear that's shaped wrongly and it causes hearing impairment. The shape of the inner ear is not correct. It's not fully developed, it's the right ear."

Wimber: "We shared the view last night that words of knowledge come in five different ways. And some of you are getting pictures but you don't know what they are. I want to encourage you that we're going to give time a little later on for you to explore the use of those things. We have to get you doing that if you're ever going to become effective at doing it.

Blaine: "There is also someone with paralysis in their knee down to their foot. It's the left leg." There's a pause while they wait. "You have a lot of pain behind the knee cap but you do have paralysis, you have a hard time moving your knee and your lower leg easily, there is a paralysis there." They waited again. "It's a male; it was a traffic accident that caused this problem. You're in your early 40s."

There seemed to be a bit of trouble identifying who this person was, but they persisted. Someone thought it might be them. Wimber and Blaine invited them to come up but they were still looking for the person they thought the word of knowledge was for. Then the person seemed to identify themselves and they were invited to come up to the stage.

Blaine: "There is also a woman with a cyst on her ovary"

Wimber: "There is also someone with swollen glands, will you come?"

Blaine: "There is also a woman who at the opening of her vagina has lesions - you can see it and it's causing you a lot of pain."

Wimber: "Why don't you come up afterwards and we will pray for you then, that's awkward. Someone has a blockage in their abdomen the lower abdomen and you have pain right here in the lower abdomen on the left side.

Blaine: "There's also someone here with a perforated colon you've been having a lot of bleeding too."

There were several other words acknowledged given either by Blaine or Wimber. When they seemed to feel they had got enough people up on stage Wimber said, "Let me make a comment about what's going on. Every time you move into the faith exercise you go through an incredible encounter. How many of you feel the encounter is going on right now? All right there is an even flow of faith. One of the reasons why we kid and say things lightly, is that we're trying to release you, because some of you, at the moment we said let's have a clinic, began tightening down. All right I understand that but I want you to understand what you're dealing with is fear. You've been programmed to fear, and that programming is intact, it's never been broken in your life, its controlling, its influencing the way you're perceiving what is going on right now, I understand what that is about you and it doesn't offend me. But if you don't understand that what you're feeling is not of God, you will never be able to make the next step, so I'm pointing it out to you as gently as I know how, so what you are experiencing is the antithesis, the opposite of faith. That's the way the enemy controls your adventure. You are moving out into the realm of faith by that feeling that gripped you when we started, when I said let's have a clinic. Now I'm pointing it out because when you point it out and you bring them out into the light, guess what happens to them, they dissipate just by naming it, it will be less now than it was before, furthermore I'm going to pray and break it over us and I'm saying that not to program you but just to let you know so that you can measure what happens in the next 20 minutes. Father we thank you that you have given us the discernment to recognise fear and how it controls us. ... so I am coming against any alien force that would attempt to stop the work of faith that is about to be exercised here and now in the name of Jesus I break your power and I command you to lift. Amen. Now take your reading,

can you feel where we are now? A different place where we were a few moments ago, can you feel it? To move in the Spirit you've got to be able to feel these things, to be able to sense them, moving in the Spirit is a bit like surfing, you've got to learn how to catch the waves, because the Spirit of God in a big meeting moves in great waves and surges, you've got to learn to move with those things, and He is about to begin moving. I know this because I've been surfing for a long time now. Remember when we shared the view last night about who to pray for first?" There was laughter and then Wimber asked the people on the stage to come forward slightly. "Now they're all slightly brave to come up here, some are frightened, some are anxious some pretty relaxed, but people are not used to being up on the stage like this in front of everybody, particularly when they don't know what we are about to do to them. What we're waiting for is for God to show us who to pray for first but God hasn't told me anything. I am going to ask Blaine if God has told him anything. Blaine has God told you anything?"

Blaine: "I think we should pray for the guy with the toes."

Blaine approached the man, he put his microphone down so we could not hear what he was saying.

Wimber: "Can you see the Spirit of God on him already? Open your eyes people, that you may see."

The man had his eyes closed and he was breathing deeply.

Wimber: "Remember last night that I said when you go through the healing process you would have an interview? This time there wasn't much of an interview because as he came forward we could see that there is so much power on him. What we're waiting for is that the Lord give direction."

Blaine was standing to the right of the man and he had his right hand on the man's chest. The man was breathing heavily and then was shaking and quivering.

Wimber went up to a woman who appeared upset and told her not to be afraid and just relax, but it was just the Lord that was resting on her - look what the Lord was doing to Joseph. He told her not to be afraid of that and just to let it happen. He said, "She's been wanting to be healed." She told him that she had come to represent her mother who was too afraid to come.

Wimber said, "Well the Lord's going to heal you."

She said, "When they called out vaginal lesions."

Wimber said, "But she didn't respond, she has to respond."

Wimber: "Now why do you suppose that God would do that to someone to heal a rash on their foot. Have you ever thought about that? I think about those things, you wouldn't think that shaking someone would make them well. You see, I don't think that God is just going to heal the psoriasis on his foot, I think it's going to heal some other areas in this man's life." The man had raised his arm up as though he was in agreement with this statement. The delegates applauded.

Blaine had moved to another lady.

Wimber: "You see, there's been an afflicting spirit on this woman and it's being lifted right now." Blaine was standing in a similar position to before and the lady was also shaking. Wimber was speaking to the first gentleman and asked him to go and help pray for one of the others who was on stage. He told them to relax. He started to pray for the man with the kneecaps. After a pause Wimber asked the second man whether he felt the power of God on him. He said he didn't.

Then Wimber checked with Joseph and said, "You can feel it can't you?" Joseph

said he could. Wimber said, "Across your shoulders and down your side. Wimber checked with the man again he still said he could not feel anything. Wimber said, "That's fascinating. Is this paralysis as a result of an accident?" He continued to check out other details. He stayed with the man a short while longer; there appeared to be little happening to him. Wimber stepped away from him and said, "That's it Joseph, you stay with him, let the energy keep flowing. Alright now, healing is not just one simple thing where you say 'in the name of Jesus' and bat them over the side of head and they fall down and it's right over or something like that. The healing process is rather sophisticated and complex. When I was praying for John, I sensed that he was very uncomfortable with the idea of being here and that's what I was praying for him under my breath for, to help him get peace and relax. And I felt him relax as I prayed to some degree, and as we continue to pray suddenly I felt that there was for me a breakthrough, I felt the energy going into his body, at first I felt the energy leaving my body and coming back at me, the force of resistance. So at that point Joseph's body began shaking more violently, that's why I asked the question, because he's like a conduit, so by Joseph maintaining his contact, there is still energy here. Can you see the hands moving? Some of you can, it is hard to see from any distance, but his hands are shaking, there is energy, there's tremendous energy on his wrist and forearm. Now I don't understand healing energy I don't know how it works. All I know is that we're here in the name of Jesus, we're not here someone else's name and we are attempting to minister to someone who hurts. And as we prayed for him I sensed that God was going to heal him over a period of time. I've moved away because I think my job is done and I think that as Joseph maintains his connection he'll pray for a while."

Wimber explained that some healings could take time – he did not know why, but the key was to learn to move in what was happening now.

Wimber: “As we cannot heal anybody, all we can do is to accommodate what Jesus is doing. We cannot make it happen, all we can do is move with the flow of what is happening. Our prayers can excite the rate of what is happening, but only to a degree. Unless God gives us the gift of faith to move more powerfully then we can't do it, we can't make it happen faster than its happening. That's the way I perceive it at the moment after praying for thousands of people.” He asked some of the other team members to come and pray for the people who were still on stage. He asked the delegates to stand.

Wimber: “Now there's a large number of people here who are having major problems with insomnia, you've gone through very difficult times with it, I want you to raise your hands.” There were a large number of raised hands. “Those of you who are around these people turn round and pray for them. I want you to rebuke the affliction because it's an afflicting spirit that is causing this in these people's lives.” He encouraged the delegates to carry on praying.

Wimber: “There are others of you here tonight who need prayer, so those of you around them turn and pray for them, raise your hands. That's it, that's it. You're all ordained to pray. Keep your hands up until someone gets you.”

There were further words of knowledge given by Blaine and other members of the team. It was very difficult to know if these people identified themselves. More people came to either Wimber or Blaine with more words and they were given.

There was a hubbub of activity in the auditorium. It was impossible to tell whether people were responding to these words of knowledge.

Wimber: “Speak to the heart valve and tell it to be healed in the name of Jesus.”

Couples who wanted children, but were barren were asked to come up – 5 couples came. One of the team was heard to pray – he asked the women to put their hands on their abdomens. He told them that the power of the Lord was upon them – they were going to feel the power of God NOW. The Spirit of God was moving over these couples. Blaine prayed, “Lord we invite your healing power and we break the plan of the evil one over these lives and we bless them with children.”

The video ended.

## **Fourth Clinic**

### **Session 7/12**

#### **Programme 7, Part 3<sup>38</sup>**

Wimber said “Let’s have a clinic. Let’s stand.” Blaine joined Wimber on the stage. “Propositionally, what I am saying is this, that every born-again Christian has the spirit of God. Everyone who has the Spirit of God has all the resources of all the gifts. Everyone who has all the resources of all the gifts can manifest those gifts if they have been initiated in them. There is an initiatory experience.

Everyone has to start someplace once. If you are here today and you are not operating in the gifts of the Spirit if you have not had freedom to speak in tongues or to prophesy or to operate in the other oral gifts or in the rest of the gifts of the Spirit, I want you to step out right now from where you are come on down and we're going to pray for you and God is going to give you that initial experience.”

The delegates applauded. Many people come forward.

Wimber: “All right.”

There is chatter and an apparent air of anticipation the room.

Wimber: “Now I'm going to give some basic instruction. I'm going to pray. Some of you are bound up, you have been taught doctrine that is directly antagonistic towards what is about to happen to you. That doctrine is binding, it has power over you. I'm going to pray and break the power hold, then I'm going to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to overwhelm you, to come upon you, and He's going to come on you. Some of you are more prepared than others. Some of you are more

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<sup>38</sup> Wimber, J. (1985d) **Program 7 Part 3 Spiritual Gifts** [online].  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sf1aCjmhe4Q&feature=mfu\\_in\\_order&list=UL](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sf1aCjmhe4Q&feature=mfu_in_order&list=UL) Anaheim Vineyard Ministries International [Accessed October 25 2010]

receptive, more responsive than others. Don't worry if you don't immediately have a manifestation. I believe that before you leave this room you will have the manifestations of the Spirit. It's part of the package, it's your right, it's your birthright, it comes with knowing Jesus. All the gifts of the Spirit will be manifest through you, not all at this moment but over the next weeks and months they will, okay? So relax, don't try to get spiritual on me, all that will do is slow down the process, the more uptight you get, the more difficult it will be to help you. Now Blaine and I are going to function as midwives. Midwives do not cause babies. All midwives do is help babies be delivered. We can't give you the Holy Spirit, that came when you were born again, we can't overwhelm you with the Holy Spirit, that is what He has to do. So I'm going to ask Him to come and He's going to do that, but what we can do is to help you receive that which is already coming your way. So we'll coach you, we'll move around among you and there are others that are going to come and help us in this process. It's a bit difficult, we are a bit crowded together but we'll get to you, all right? What I want you to do is not to get your focus on anything but Him, just look to Jesus and I'll pray you receive or release or something like that. Ready, get set! Now relax, you're going to like this stuff. Let's pray.

Father, we rejoice in your goodness, we thank you that all of the riches of heaven are ours in Christ Jesus and that you've not only given us salvation for the future, but you've given us salvation for this day, this moment, for now, and Lord in the context of your love for us and your charity towards us, you've not called us to ministry that you will not back up by giving us the blessings we need to bless others with. Now Lord we thank you for those who have come out of obedience and responsiveness in their hearts to receive from you, and in the name of Jesus

we pray. Now Lord and we come against teaching that would control and stop people from receiving the blessing of God, in the name of Jesus we tear it down, we break its power and authority (Wimber strongly emphasises these words underlined) over these, and now Lord we invite you to come and overwhelm your children, fill them O God as you did on the day of Pentecost, by your Spirit anoint them, give them unction and blessing in the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.”

He waited for a few seconds. Some noises are heard from individuals.

Wimber: "It's all right, that's the Spirit coming."

A tongue is given and apparently interpreted.

Wimber: (after about 80 seconds) “The Spirit of God is just brooding over and blessing many of you. I can see him rippling over many of you now. Receive the Spirit of the Lord. Don't be afraid of the emotional response of some, don't let that put you off.

Remember when the light comes it flushes darkness. There is residue, pockets of darkness, don't be afraid of that. This is your opportunity. Hallelujah! That's it, that's it.

Some of you are feeling your throat is moving involuntarily, your tongue, that is the gift of tongues, just release it in obedience. Speak softly, let it out, that's it, that's it. Don't listen to it, you'll stop, just let it out. Remember the enemy is a liar, he's going to tell you that's not it. That's it, go-ahead, go on, adda girl, be bold, speak it out.”

More tongues and interpretation.

Wimber: "Let the burden of the Lords heart descend on you". Some hand shaking/waving seen. "May you know the agony of His hurt, may you know the burden of His heart. Weep ye my people, and know that I am God."

The noise level rose and became louder, there was more crying out, there were more raised voices.

Wimber: "Receive ye the Lord, receive ye the Lord."

Wimber started to sing the song, "Spirit of the Living God." The congregation joined in. He then started singing in tongues and the congregation joined in with more volume. Wimber became quieter and the noise from the congregation died down. Wimber started singing in tongues again and the volume went up, the people became louder.

Wimber: "That's it, sing unto the Lord, let your spirits soar unto the Lord. Give Him praise and honour in the sanctuary, halleluiah!"

More singing in tongues followed. More statements/prophecies from the floor, some were shouted out. The sounds included those sounding like distress and wailing. Wimber made no comment about this.

Wimber: "Let the Spirit of evangelism come upon you."

Wimber went to the piano and played "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus." He went through all the verses, 'He lives, we live through him, halleluiah'. The congregation joined in. The general noise continued. The atmosphere of distress seemed to come to an end. At the end of the song there were more shouted 'prophecies' from the floor Wimber said "Rejoice" and started applause. The congregation joined in.

There was more noise among the people, more tongues and interpretation, again seemingly ignored by Wimber. Some people had their hands raised.

What sounded like a prophecy in English followed from among the congregation with more shouting and the noise increased again. There was more wailing, there were people shown in with their eyes closed, looking up with tears on their faces. There was more shouting and crying out.

"We give you praise and honour you O God.

Now many of you were released in gifts you've never had before. We rejoice in that. There are others of you that were not released, you've had a good experience, but it has not been what you came for. I want those of you who have need of further ministry, that as we dismiss I want you to go out and into the multipurpose room – out the hall and to the right. We're going to send the team there to continue to minister to you. Keep in mind the that not everything comes instantly for everyone. We are ready and prepared to help those of you who need more coaching, midwifery that God will help you to receive and release that which you came for. Lets pray. Father we rejoice in your goodness. We thank you for this season of visitation, we thank you for what you are doing among us O God and we give you glory and honour for it. Now we bless you Lord and we bless these as we dismiss for lunch O Lord we ask your blessing on each and every one, those that are just released in the gifts and those who are about to in the next few minutes, in the name of Jesus, amen. Out the door and to the right!"

The video ended.

## **Appendix 2**

### **How To Do Ministry Time Or Kill Yourself Trying Vineyard UK National Leaders Conference Seminar, 2011**

**Led By Dave And Laura Smith<sup>39</sup>**

I have transcribed this podcast as accurately as possible. The leaders spoke informally, fast and did not always articulate well. I have made it clear by using ... and ~ where there are gaps either of silence or asides/indistinct sounds/speech. When delegates spoke from the floor, I have omitted what was said. I do not believe that I have altered the sense of the seminar as delivered in my transcript, but because of the informal way it was delivered; in places I have summarised what I understood was being said rather than try and transcribe every word.

... = indistinct sounds/speech. ~ = silent space

Dave introduced himself and his wife Laura.

Dave: "Laura has always been in the Vineyard...She was born saying 'Come Holy Spirit'. I come from a much more evangelical background, very solid, Anglican, bible base. I came into Vineyard looking for something extra to add on to that...I can see the explosive value of ministry if you add it onto a solid bible base. This is a very practical look at how to do ministry times. What do we mean

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<sup>39</sup> Smith, D. and Smith, L. (2011) **How to do Ministry Time or Kill Yourself Trying - podcast** [online]. <http://www.vineyardchurches.org.uk/index.php?mact=PodcastManager,md6f9d,default,1&md6f9dgroupid=6&md6f9ddisplayfiles=true&md6f9dreturnid=50&page=50> [Accessed Januray 19 2012]

by ministry times? What are we looking for? There are moments in life which rise above the mundane...and the Holy Spirit just breaks into what you're doing. Particularly we're going to look at when we do that in church. You've had worship time, you've had coffee, you've had a doughnut, you've had the talk and then we all get to stand up and someone says 'Come Holy Spirit' What happens next? That's the particular area we're going to look at today. First of all, why should we bang this drum? What is it about ministry times? What makes it part of Vineyard? Is ministry time always spontaneous? Is it something you should be ready for 24/7? Or is it something you can actually plan to do? Is ministry time solely for the market place i.e. out on the streets, or does it only go on in church? How do we look at those two very different atmospheres?" (He explored some more scenarios). "We're going to look at some theory and then do some practical stuff.

First of all we're going to look at why we should bang this drum. What is it that makes the Vineyard different from perhaps other movements, perhaps other streams of Christianity? Why is it something that we tend to do well and tend to do a lot in the Vineyard?"

"It's a distinctive, gives us an edge. I know John Mumford has said he doesn't like the phrase, 'cutting edge', but it is quite descriptive of what we are as a movement. The kind of ministry times that we do does make us slightly different from lots of other streams of Christianity particularly in the UK.

Ministry time is often where the devil fails the most. It's one of those moments in life when you're out in the street with somebody or in church praying with somebody – it's one of the moments when the devil fails the most. Or he falls down the most. It is a bit like the passage of the Christ, Jesus is in the Garden of

Gethsemane and He treads on the snake's head. It's like you're treading on Satan's head because you're getting the Spirit directly into someone's life. You're bypassing everything, all the barriers into their lives”.

(This paragraph is a summary of the next section). Back in 2003 church attendance hit an all-time low in the UK and the so-called experts were predicting that the church would die out by 2050. It's not quite so bad today because the church has grown a little bit since then.

Not all denominations will be here in 2050 because they don't do this kind of thing. We're moving into the future. The now and the not yet. It's the not yet we are trying to get into in the present. With this in the Lord's prayer where it says give us this day our daily bread, were asking God to give us tomorrow's stuff today, so it's futuristic. So we're distinctive in what we do and we are futuristic in what we do, and it's also contemporary, something that happens now, the now and then not yet.

“What do you remember about the times in your life when you change the most? It's often in ministry time. Where do you remember the most poignant times when Jesus broke into your life in a very spiritual way?”

Laura: “We often talk about this in our church, in that we want to study the Bible we want to be biblically literate but if you don't apply the Holy Spirit to that then you just become very, very clever. I think there is value in knowing the Bible and studying the Scriptures but there is something about when the Holy Spirit comes and touches someone's life that their life is changed. I don't think their life is changed just by reading the Bible. I think the Holy Spirit has to do something and certainly in our church we give times to ministry time. We try and train our leaders to understand that we should never meet together and not have a

ministry time, we should always have ministry time wherever there is opportunity for it. I think as people who lead ministries, as people who are church planters here, that are pastors here, just wherever you can have an opportunity you are studying the word but you are also doing the stuff working studying the word and doing the stuff. We read the word and then we do the stuff. If you look at any examples of Jesus in the Gospels, He would do something miraculous and then unpack it and explain it or explain what he was going to do and then do it, so working the word, word workers that is what we do that's what disciples do, they read the stuff in the Scriptures and then they do it".

Dave: "Have you heard of the phrase or the theology of the third wave at all? ... when the church and the vineyard collided it became a kind of charismatic evangelical revival and it was called the 'third wave'. It was the third wave of the evangelical churches and the word worker - we read the word we understand the word, we practise the word. Do something and then demonstrate it. Nicky Gumbel talks about pilot light Christians and 'whoosh' Christians. Some Christians just have the 'pilot light' going on and then there's an influx of power, a whoosh, the gasket's turned up, it gets hotter and there's more connectedness with God. That's the kind of thing that we're talking about and ideally it's all kind of pointless unless God shows up. If you came here today you may have spent £200, £400, £1000 to get here, why are you here if God isn't here? It's all pointless if God isn't here isn't it? We do ministry times because that's what God asks us to do. God shows up and we take Him seriously.

... so we're going to do our first ministry time were going to talk about what the whoosh moment is. Would everyone stand up please. It's going to be a practical thing. Mary Pytches said the other night about everyone being blessed and

coming forward. We want you to stay standing if you want a whoosh moment, if you feel like you need a touch from the Holy Spirit, remain standing. If you feel that that you've had your fill then please sit down, but if you feel you want a whoosh moment then we will pray for you”.

Laura: “So what we want to do is to model different ways that you can do ministry time on a Sunday, in a small group, wherever you find yourself and the classic Vineyard one is come Holy Spirit, so close your eyes hold out your hands and relax and that's what we're going to do. ‘Lord I just ask that you would come and that you would touch people and that people in this room would have that whoosh moment, would have that connection with you Jesus. Holy Spirit would you come and teach us about you’?

And this is a great model to teach people about ministry times because on a Sunday morning when you're having ministry times you can then say to people, you may be feeling heat, you may be feeling trembly, you may be feeling tingling on your lips or on your fingers, and that's God, that's God connecting with you. Because He is for you because He loves you”.

Dave: “What you've done is stepped out of your comfort zone and given it totally over to God so you're waiting for God to move over the people who you're ministering to so you're looking for eyelids fluttering, shaking hands or heat on faces, for something going on and if nothing happens it's not your responsibility, you've done exactly what God asked you to do,...”

Laura: “We would describe this in our church as a clinic time, so ‘God come and teach us about your ways’”.

Dave: “Some of you have quite strange looks on your faces, quite peaceful looks but you can see something is going on, you're really engaging with the Holy

Spirit, so we've already taken you into that zone, into that place where God wants you to be.”

Laura: “If you feel like you're having a moment, that He's with you at the moment could you put up your hand. ‘Now more, more, bless them, bless them Lord,’ “(16 people)”. ‘Lord turn up the heat, bless them. Lord I pray that in this final seminar they get what they came for, that they get their money's worth. ~ more of you and, Lord, I just pray that you will stay in this room, that you would increase your presence throughout the rest of this workshop’. “So as this is going on some people will be feeling things, some people standing near people who are engaged with God will start to sense things so it becomes almost contagious, infectious. Some of you have suddenly had a thought in your mind an impression, an emotion, and you sense that either it's for you, there'll be a witness in your spirit that says ‘yes, that resonates with me’ or I've got a thought in my mind and I don't know where that's come from. Well that's someone else in the room. ‘Bless them Lord’. ~ so there's a guy at the front, Andy and the Spirit of God is on him and he's got a kind of flushing on his cheeks and he is shaking little bit, some people are showing outward emotion and that as pastors and leaders when we are leading something on a Sunday morning, you look for that and when you see God on someone, you just bless it, you don't have to do joined up prayers. ‘More Holy Spirit more, bless them, have your way, increase your presence, Lord that you would bring healing, that you would bring freedom’. And this is what we mean by ‘word workers’. We've listened to the talk and now we've invited the Holy Spirit to come into our lives. ~ if you are not engaged with God and you want to sit down that's fine, if you want to continue standing that's okay. Dave is going to come and explain another model in a few minutes. If you don't want to

interrupt what God is doing with you and if you didn't feel that you could engage with God then there'll be another chance in a minute”.

Dave: “So is ministry time spontaneous or is it planned? And the answer is ‘yes’ to both of those. We can see in the Bible lots of times, Jesus prayed all night and you got the sense that you come down the mountainside and he'd walk out into the crowd of people and he knew exactly what God wanted to do. He might get into the boat, you can tell because he got into the boats that he knew that there was something going to happen after that. He gets into the boat he preaches to the crowd he gets them to push the boat out to catch the fish so you know that something is going to happen. Or you get the story of Jairus' daughter, He is going to raise Jairus' daughter from the dead and you get the woman who is bent over double who touches his cloak, and He doesn't realise till the woman has touched Him and the power goes out of Him, so that was much more spontaneous. He turns round and asks who it was who touched Him. ...

Dave: (Summary) You need to know then how you receive things, your own style. Laura is prophetic visual person and receives things 10 minutes before. I am a wisdom, kinaesthetic kind of person, I have to get my hands dirty don't get things usually till 10 minutes afterwards, so I have to engage the person in chat before the word comes. ... what kind of learner are you? That will help you plan ahead how you actually do ministry times ... it's quite okay to plan a ministry time like you would plan a talk. So it's all right to ask the night before, what would you like me to say tomorrow Lord? If God doesn't give you anything, then be spontaneous when the time comes. If He does then you've got a kind of heads up. How do you plan? Do you want to talk about that? End of summary.

Laura: "I would plan ministry time. Most obviously ministry time would follow the topic from the talk, so if you've been talking about dealing with anger or forgiveness then, to me then it would be natural, so it goes back to the word workers, they talked about a particular thing then you give an opportunity for people to respond, I think that's the most obvious thing. I think that it is wise to allow yourself a little bit of time and to ask Lord is there any one particular they want to give a word to? 'Is there a particular theme that You want me to bring to the light during the ministry time?' and just try and come prepared with the theme of one or two words that could be scriptures or pictures and God gives dreams just for that reason I have normally one of my children's felt tip pens that has run out by my bed or a pen and paper, so that I can write down the thoughts or impressions that I have that you've been thinking about that week or you've had the impression that someone has come into your mind and to highlight that. For us we would prepare sermons before we deliver them; we can prepare ministry time so we can say in the ministry time "we want to ensure that this person gets ministry or this prophetic word is delivered." Plan and expect that God is going to come to your church, to your service. He wants to minister and bless your people and change the lives of those people at that particular meeting. So be expectant of it and plan for it".

Dave: "Another area that we want to concentrate on is that of healing. I was very intrigued by what John did on Monday night. He prayed "come Holy Spirit" and then waited for about 2½ minutes, (it felt more like half an hour) and then got several words of knowledge about healing. I think that's a very interesting thing to get into. You can soak yourself in the idea that God wants to heal the people that you're ministering to, so sometimes that comes before the moment of

ministry. So you might wake up on a Friday morning with a thumping headache and it goes after a few seconds, so you realise that it's the people with headaches in your church or a twinge in your ankle so you're thinking that God can actually affect you with those. Just being expectant that God is going to do that on the Sunday".

Discussion from the floor.

"We need to become naturally supernatural not wild and wacky like the prophets in the Old Testament or behave in a strange way. Just be natural and drop Jesus into the conversation. ... just allow your faith level to rise, the more you do this, you get into that zone and the more you're living and you're expecting things to happen all the time particularly when you're run into somebody in the street that you haven't seen in years and you realise that God is speaking to that person, you've had a chance encounter".

Laura: "I think this is on a Sunday morning if you think you have a word of knowledge it's so easy to stop and think about that word of knowledge and ask, is that me? Is that God? And before you know it, you've completely justified it as yourself and not God and you've lost your nerve or the person who it was for has gone. So you might say, "Think before you speak," but the Kingdom of God turned everything on its head and you need to speak before you think, before you can actually justify it, before you actually start with your logic into it, I'm going to give a word to a stranger and I'm going to sound crazy, before you even think that you've got to give it, otherwise you'll lose your nerve and completely justify it and then not give it. Just do it. If God has given you a word and He's expecting you to deliver it. You're the messenger and as long as you're doing it in love and in

the right way, don't spend such a long time thinking about it and justifying it that you lose your nerve and you don't do it. ... “

Comments from the floor.

Dave: “There is a moment when the Holy Spirit turns up, ... is the moment when the Holy Spirit just clicks, and you need to minister at that moment. ... A moment when He arrives and suddenly the whole atmosphere changes, the whole temperature changes. Just be who you are but know there is a moment when the Holy Spirit actually turns up.

Right, lets practice that. What I'm going to ask you to do is to stay seated, close your eyes and were going to ask God to give you words, but only the first couple of words, okay? So I'm going to pray and God is going to give you a word of some sort and you can either speak that out, or you can practice it in your head before you speak it out so I'm going to pray ‘come Holy Spirit and give us some really definite, specific words, just the first couple of words so that we can step out and say, so come Lord’”.

Several people offered a selection of words from the floor.

Laura: “Now there's expectation in the room, there's a level of faith in the room there's expectation; God is here speaking. God is going to do something and so then this is a really good thing to do in front of people, it's a really good thing to do on Sunday morning it raises faith, it's like God is here He's going to do something, He's going to change a life this morning, He's going to heal someone, He is going to set them free, He's going to equip them for an area of ministry, so some of those words as they were given, some of you suddenly felt like a bit, Oh, I think that might be for me. You suddenly felt a bit shaky and thought oh no, oh no, I can hear my heart, that kind of thing, a part of you resonated with some of

those words. Put your hands up. Okay. Keep them up, what you need to do, the rest of you is turn round and see who's got their hands up and you have got two minutes to go and pray for them. Find out what the word was if it's appropriate. Girls pray for girls, boys pray for boys. Be really quick, no time to chat, just pray for them. ~ and the Lord said "Amen". You might think that we're being very irreverent but we're trying to equip you with as many ways of doing ministry time as we can. That's why we're rushing".

Dave: "Build ministry into everything you do. Pray all the time, minister all the time. Always expect something to be happening always expect God to break into your mundane Mondays, into whatever you're doing. It might be that it's something for you, it's not necessarily a one-way street. This is just one way of doing ministry. The one you've just been doing is probably the one that Wimber set out, you know you just ask somebody why they came forward for prayer then you would diagnose what their problem was and pray and pray and give them something to go away with afterwards. You can do that all the time, you can do it on the street and do it on Sunday morning, in the house group, with your family, you can do it anywhere".

Summary. This one then is the list of 27 spiritual gifts. During ministry time we get people to look through its a list of 27 spiritual gifts and see who else in the room has got them, so they might see they've got healing on them or administration or evangelist. People often get the same gift three or four times. It's a really good way to build up faith and strength. What we generally find is that you won't see your own gift or the strengths that you've got. You don't see your own gift because you're naturally doing it, you just do what you do. More....

Laura: "So what we would suggest very practically is that you have a list of 27 spiritual gifts and you're doing this on a Sunday morning and you're standing up and we are going to encourage and equip each other so that we know what our spiritual gifts are, so we're building up the church building up the congregation. You could have this on the OHP (overhead projector) or on handouts and say, "I want you to get into groups," or we're going to have a team at the front and the team is going to look at the congregation and say, "right I think you've got the gift of faith and you've got the gift of mercy," and then people can receive prayer about the words that have been spoken over them. I think it builds faith, I think it empowers people. They go away thinking, "I didn't know I had faith, I didn't know I had mercy, that people could see that on me".

Summary. New leaders will come and gifts will be spotted on them and they will go away encouraged and often will start moving in those gifts because they've been spotted on them. So then they can be trained and developed fully in that gift.

Dave: Summary. Review come Holy Spirit.

"The next one is the one that is best one for me where you get personal prophecy. This is where, in your house group, you get a guinea pig and you sit them down and you pray for some prophetic words for this person and they shut their eyes. You've got about eight or nine people around them just waiting for a word of knowledge to come for that person. It's good for me because I can sit there for 10 minutes and wait for the Holy Spirit to just land on me and then I can go like an express train about all the things that God has given me. But it takes about 10 minutes for it to arrive from me. You can do this on a Sunday morning as well. You've got some people who you think they could really do with some

specific words of knowledge. Get three or four people up the front and just stand them there and get the crowd to just prophesy over them, I think God is saying this to you I think God is saying this to you. It's quite scary for the people, but it's actually quite powerful because you're inviting God on a blank page just to say, what do you want this person?

Healing words; always give healing words, at least one healing word a week if not more just invite the Holy Spirit to come and heal. You will generally find that healing occurs mostly in a crowd and it's the one we most covet and the one we least get on a regular basis. We're just inviting the Holy Spirit to do that. We're just stepping out of our comfort zone and asking the Holy Spirit on a regular basis.

This one. Words of knowledge, I think someone's got a headache I think something is wrong with them or maybe a bit more specific than that. It can be that you just get one word and you've got to stand up and give that before God gives you the rest. God gives you the flow of it as you step out, it's just taking that risk. Faith is spelt R I S K.

Next one. Say what you see. We're going to do that now".

Laura: "Now these guys, you can look at them or you can close your eyes, it's up to you. They're going to stare at you and make you feel uncomfortable and then we are just going to pray that God will release specific words for people in this room, for encouragement, for building up and so on and then what you have to do as intelligent grown-ups is to weigh that up. Is that the Lord? Is that not the Lord? They are just the messengers and you have to discern whether that is for you. So I'm just going to pray. "Holy Spirit I just ask that you would honour where we are trying to learn more about you where we're trying to hear about

you. God, the truth is that if we don't engage the Holy Spirit we will die and churches will die, so Lord I just pray that we will take all the good from this seminar and learn and be excited about ministry time and do it at every single opportunity. God, as leaders let us never meet together and not do ministry, we need to do ministry at every opportunity and Father, right now I pray that you would just release your words, your specific words to the people in this room, Lord that you would encourage people, would you instruct them, would you build them up? Jesus have your way, come Holy Spirit.”

So these guys are going to get some words and then you have an opportunity to respond to that and the tendency with that is that people tend to start to get really religious, so don't get religious when you're doing this, don't be like laying an egg or stop. We're not going to say, “Thus says the Lord,” because it gives no opportunity for people to say, “Well no that's not God.” Better to start with saying, “I think it's possible that God might be saying ...”, so that people have got an opportunity to weigh it up. So just be really relaxed, don't be all religious about it, don't have ages and ages where people are sitting here and nothing is being said because people start to get tense. Keep it really relaxed. If God doesn't speak, that's what your doughnuts are for. Have your doughnuts, go and have coffee and then we'll do it again later”.

Words come from the floor for a further 15 minutes when the podcast ended.

(D Smith and Smith, 2011)

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Promotional Video<sup>40</sup>**

Transcript of parts 'Celebrate', a promotional video posted on Vineyard Churches UK website. The video is a series of comments/statements (or vox pops) in different segments given by a variety of Vineyard UK church leaders. Not every vox pop has been transcribed. I selected sections if, in my opinion they included catchphrases or behaviours which those unfamiliar with Vineyard ways would most likely find unusual.

The video started:

"I did see the Lord Jesus surrounded by His disciples and He turned round – I didn't see His face but I felt it, and He said, I am only asking you to mimic me. That's how this began, and what did He tell us to do? Preach the Gospel to the poor, recovery of sight to the blind, liberty to those who are oppressed, and to have fun in the doing of it".

#### **Worship**

"Worship is the thing that most people associate with Vineyard across the world. There is an immediacy, an accessibility about it that is very attractive, that people are able to grasp very quickly. It goes to the heart. You see people just melting

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<sup>40</sup> VineyardChurches (2011) **Celebrate** [online]. <http://www.vineyardchurches.org.uk/about-vineyard-churches/vision-values.html> Vineyard Churches UK [Accessed July 28 2011]

as they worship, weeping or just waiting in the presence of the Lord. There is something very remarkable that happens”.

“There is a sense of allowing that one-to-one connection with God. That’s the thing we desire. That element of drawing close to God of that intimacy with God, having that special relationship with God”.

“For me, that’s the thing that really gripped me, being able to draw close to God as if our life depended on it”.

“I remember walking into a meeting and some quiet worship was being played on the piano and I have never heard anything that connected me to God in that way”.

“It’s about an open-heartedness that says, “Here I am I just want to offer my love and my life to you as you’ve so freely done it to me””.

“If you come into the presence of God in worship, there’s no way you won’t be changed by it and you won’t receive healing or a touch from God”.

“One of the things Vineyard songs do is they unlock intimacy in people’s hearts and allow people to come into that intimate relationship with Christ which actually flows through the rest of their life”.

## Holy Spirit

“You might look around the room and see someone shaking or their eyelids fluttering. There might be a shine on their face or when we lay hands on somebody for healing, we might ask them what they’re feeling and they might say they’re feeling heat”.

“Our aim is never to hype that up, never to create an emotional atmosphere, rather to calm things down”.

“It’s about helping people to see the Lord and connect with Him”.

“When John Wimber brought his team over, in fact John didn’t do much, he stood and commented on where he saw the Holy Spirit was moving. Then some of his team would clamber over the pews that were in our church at that time because they wanted to get to those people”.

“So we’re all the time trying to demystify what the Holy Spirit is doing so that we can train people how to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit, how to follow His leading and how to pursue what He is doing to the end”.

“There were lots of new converts with lots of stuff – sin, but I don’t ever remember our small group leader facing us up with our stuff, we would just encounter Jesus week in week out and then just make changes. Change came naturally as we encountered God”.

Other catchphrases heard on this video: Naturally supernatural; Jobs and Jesus; Food and faith; Steak on you plate while you wait; faith is spelt R I S K'; Everyone gets to play'; Kingdom ministry/people/theology; (VineyardChurches, 2011)

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