Missional Churches with Alan Hirsch

Part 1 of 1: Living Missionally in a Local Context
with Darrell Bock, Alan Hirsch
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Welcome to The Table, where we discuss issues of God and culture. And today, our topic is the missional church. I'm Darrell Bock, Executive Director of the Howard G. Hendricks Center for Christian Leadership and Cultural Engagement. And with me today is Alan Hirsch, who actually is a friend who I've run across in ministry in over a decade. I remember the first time we met was at a Chosen People Board Meeting.

And which you came in with your brother, who runs Celebrate Messiah. But let's talk about you. You've written several books. We're going to be discussing On the Verge today, the deal with the missional church and, particularly, churches that are having to adjust to a more missional outreach.

Alan is on the adjunct faculty at Wheaton College, as well as at Fuller Seminary. He leads a series of works called the Forge Series for Intervarsity Press – well known in dealing with the missional church, and it really is our pleasure to have you with us today.

Yeah, it's great to be with you. It wasn’t that long ago when we were sitting in Melbourne, Australia.

I know. It's amazing you know. We meet in all these exotic places. The coffee shop in Melbourne and then here at Dallas Seminary.

Something for Jesus, huh.

Exactly right. And Alan has started a ministry that is centered in Los Angeles. Is that right? You've moved to L.A.

Yes. Well, yeah, the ministry actually is more centered – well the idea is to kind of focus on the American context. But we live in L.A. now. So yes, yeah. But, really, we have hubs all around the country in the Forge hub scene.

We still understand your English, so it works. Let's just dive in. I notice that in the book, Verge, you talked about four steps: Imagine; shift, which obviously brings in the idea of changing; move; and innovate. And everything you write says basically to think fresh, to think in fresh ways, to be willing to change. And so two questions: Why is change so important for the church? And then, secondly, what doesn't change?
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Alan Hirsch: Yes. Yeah, why is change important for the church? Well, in a sense, I think the short answer to that is that what – I think what has got us to this point in history I don't believe is going to get us much further. We've pretty much operated out of an understanding in the church that comes from the European experience, primarily seeing ourselves within a – what I call institutional paradigm. And that paradigm is pretty much how the church has engaged in the West for, well 17 centuries or so.

But, as we know, engaged in a much more seriously nonchurched, unchurched, and increasingly dechurched context. And we need to adopt a missional stance in relationship to our context. And that necessitates change, because our method – well, I mean the church in America is – all indicators, statistically, is that is in decline, and it's systematic and it's trending.

So it's clear that I think what has got us to this point I don't think it's going to get us further. Having said that, clearly they – we're still the church. The elements, how we draw ourselves are, again, they're from Scripture, from our understanding of God and our particular understanding of who Jesus is, and that which we carry. I think it's more like going back to our regional message and then trying to rediscover it again.

And, in a sense, all I'm doing in my work is what, in the reformed circles, are called semper reformunda, which is the church reformed. It will always to be reforming according to the Word of God.

Darrell Bock: Right.

Alan Hirsch: So we're looking at the church and we're looking with the Word of God in the other hand, and we're saying, "Is there still stuff to be learned here about how we can be God's people more effectively than we are now?"

Darrell Bock: Now, most people are aware that the situation in Europe and the situation in Australia and New Zealand is obviously a much – the Christian Church is a much more constricted impact in society and not many European people attend church, that kind of thing.

Alan Hirsch: Yeah.
Darrell Bock: How much of your perception has been fueled by the experience that you came to the states with where you watched this happen to the church?

Alan Hirsch: Yeah. In many ways, like I say to people that we've seen the decentering of the church. We've experienced it in the Australian context. We now, in terms of the biblical Christianity, what we say the broad evangelicals, charismatic, evangelicals, Pentecostals, self-define themselves in our census about 2.9 percent of our population. I mean that's relatively significant in statistical terms.

The European experience is very similar. In Germany, that same statistic is around about 2 percent. And that's where we got our understanding of the church from in the first place, primarily anyway. So I feel like it's kind of like – and from – in one way I'm from the future of the Western church in America if something doesn't change.

And I do believe I've been sent here by God. I do feel that there's a great sense of call to – on the understanding that we, as far as the church in the West is concerned though, it seems to me that we win or lose here in the States. If we don't turn the ship around here – I don't think it's going to come from Europe.

They’ve had it for 17 centuries, 20 centuries of it, and it really has ended up as a bus crash you know. So it has to be turned around here. And so I feel like I've been called to kind of serve the American churches.

Darrell Bock: Yeah, I have a very much similar feel of experience. I've done three sabbaticals – four sabbaticals in Germany, and I spent three years in Scotland doing doc work. So seven years of my adult life have been spent in Europe, and I've seen what Europe is.

Alan Hirsch: Devastating.

Darrell Bock: Exactly. And I always felt – like is said, people have asked me, "Why do you sabbatical in Europe?" I said, "Because I want to see kind of where things are headed and think about how to avoid going there."
Alan Hirsch: I would say the people out here – the Americans kind of doubt that. All you need is to look at the real population census in America. So you look at New York City and the whole eastern seaboard, the western seaboard as well. Somewhat different in L.A., but certainly as we move up toward the north, there's no doubt about it that the church is increasingly taken out of its privileged position and pushed to the margins.

This is equally true of what's happening in Chicago and other parts of the Midwest where the populations are. It's definitely the trend. Now, America's different. It's not going to be European secularity, but the logic of Western civilization I think is Europe. The logic there is that the church is going to be forced into a marginal situation where it becomes one of the voices among many in a pluralist society.

Darrell Bock: Yes.

Alan Hirsch: And that's a different place to stand, and we need to learn how to witness to what we stand for when in that context.

Darrell Bock: Yeah, I often say that our culture is shifting from a place where a Bible was seen as an answer to the Bible being the question. And so being able to get into the content of the Bible is an important step for people who are leaders in the church to know how to take. And many are not trained to go there because they were used to having this privileged position and assuming they could say, "The Bible says," and they would immediately have credibility. That's all changing.

Alan Hirsch: Yeah, it's all changing, and fast. The thing is in America and my understanding – I love this country – ideas are adopted very quickly so, again, that leaning into the future, openness to possibility, and that's the wonderful side of the American context. But ideas are dropped equally as quickly. So decline, when it happens, I think will come very, very fast and become shockingly fast.

So if you listen to Varner's book – Varner no longer heads up his organization – but when he writes of revolution, it might be understatement, but the logic is there, the trend is set. He says that by 2025, the church will have halved its attendance. And he was writing in 2005. So half the attendance of what they had in 20 years. So I don't know if that's true or not, but it's – definitely the trend is there and so we need to be prepared for it.
Darrell Bock: Well, I asked you – you've explained why change is necessary. Let's do the other half. What doesn't change? How do we change – if I can say this – how do we change without changing that which is important?

Alan Hirsch: Yeah. So for me, actually the answer is actually going back beyond the Western derivatives, of the European derivative, to a most fundamental message, which is the Scriptures. So, for me, my most fundamental – and I think God has bugged me with this. And my calling was to actually try and get under the hood of what's happening in the early church.

How does it grow from 25,000 in the year 100 – that’s Dawson’s figure – to upwards to 20 million around about 300, so 200 years later? How does it hit that kind of exponential high impact?

Darrell Bock: That's real church growth.

Alan Hirsch: I mean that's huge. But they don't have everything that we have. They didn't have – and the Bible actually didn't – it was being put together.

Darrell Bock: That's right.

Alan Hirsch: They didn't have seeker-sensitive buildings. They didn't – they were illegal. They were persecuted – at times, severely. They didn't have podcasts, all this stuff that we all know and you think you need to build the church and yet they grow. So, for me, I wanted to really get back under there. And I think the logic of that is the New Testament ecclesiology or the New Testament understanding of the church.

So I think the answer – our greatest answers are remembered. They're not new. This is not a novelty. It's actually going back to our most fundamental phenomenon of ecclesiology, which is what? The New Testament. So we're going back to try and discover that nature of the movement of God that we see in the pages of the New Testament.

Darrell Bock: Yeah, what strikes me in reading the material that you worked with is that we are going back to this kind of core, dynamic community that is much more open ended in the way it operates and is structured than the way we normally think of church with its structures and departments and that kind of thing.
Alan Hirsch: That's right.

Darrell Bock: And so the general feel that you have is it's a much more interactive, much more responsive kind of organism than an institution or business that's delivering a product.

Alan Hirsch: Yup, absolutely. So when you look at it, it's – in a way if I did a quick description, think it's a group of people that really are hanging out with Jesus. So, as we said, that Jesus is at the core. And the core motto is Jesus is Lord, which carries, as you know, a huge amount of weight.

Darrell Bock: That's right.

Alan Hirsch: It's a worldview in three words. There's a discipleship ethos, there's a strong commitment to following him and becoming more like him and then embody the faith in significant ways. There's a commitment to extend the mission to what we say missional saintness and then going down deep into culture so contextualizing it.

There's a kind of a mystery that is commensurate to the past so that we say if you want a missional church you have to have a missional ministry for it. And then I would say that the biggest clue to that is the Ephesians 4 text. We might talk about that later. And then, you know, it organizes differently. It's a movement, so it's decentered. It's a people movement; everyone gets to play. It's quite a remarkable phenomenon. They didn't have Internet, too. And yet they held together.

Darrell Bock: Yeah.

Alan Hirsch: So they had a common identity, but they were flourishing. And they had an adventuresome nature about them that they flourished in the midst of severe trial at times. So there's something about that that we need to recover nowaday.
Yeah, that's well put. Well, let's go through the elements here. I'm going to – for people who aren't familiar with your work, I'm going to deal with the elements by just laying them out and quickly describing them. And if I misstep, do correct me. But what you call apostolic genius is the idea, first of all, that Jesus is Lord, kind of the theological center and worldview, the hub, if you will, of what's going on.

There's disciple making, which you use the synonym oftentimes, apprenticeship, which I think is a nice way to think about it. Then there's the missional incarnational impulse. This is the drive to move out, I think, and make other people like-minded people in what you do. The apostolic environment, which is the idea that there are gifts and enablements that are spread across the entirety of the body, if I can say it that way.

And then, finally – well, not finally – then there's organic systems, thinking about the decentralization of what that dynamic requires. And then, finally, there's communitas, which is community, intense community, real community. Which, when we get to, we'll have to talk about because the American culture is so individualized, building community is very, very difficult. So there's six elements here.

And what's interesting is that you say that Jesus is Lord is at the hub of what you discuss. Everything else you say other movements have. And I really got caught by the fact that you compared it to Communist China and not the normal comparison, and I normally don't put church and Communist China next to one another in thinking about how sociologically movements work.

But the point you're making is they make disciples; they get everybody involved; there's a missional impulse in reaching out. They're obviously organic systems. I'm not sure how decentralized, necessarily, it is, but there is an organic system that makes it work, and there's an attempt to build a sense, at least, of community.

So your point is everything else that drives major movements, even something like coming out of Communist China, you will see in other movements. But what makes this movement unique is Jesus as Lord being at the center. So how does that – what is that – you've talked about, call it the Jesus vibe – what is that in your thinking?
Alan Hirsch: Well, it's interesting. I think in Verge I think I refer to Al-Qaeda, even shockingly. And because if you look at that, it's what we say is as – and you know the term, phenomenology.

Darrell Bock: Right.

Alan Hirsch: It's the interrelationship that things have with each other and the study of how things come together to inform each other and create a phenomenon. If you look at Al-Qaeda – which is a shocking comparison – other than the center which, of course, is the – it sets the whole vibe for it because at their – at the core of Jihadism, of course, is the notion of a very militant understanding of Allah.

But the rest of it, the capacity to, as you say, make disciples or to kind of transfer the message, one to one, the kind of the mission, the sense of call and saintness, a calling to do their job. And they'll do it one way or another.

Darrell Bock: That's right.

Alan Hirsch: And all those elements begin to play. And that's a shocking thing because actually I think – and this, it's – may be wonderful. Because if you look at all movements, actually, this applies to what we said are orders of creation, not just the orders of redemption, not just true of the church. It's true of all people movements. It's the phenomena of movement.

And what changes the game is Jesus. It's a total game changer because the founder, what he represents, his teachings, what he embodies and what he calls us to, actually begins to permeate through the whole. The rest is just kind of a means of spreading it. And, yes, it does. And Jesus is the game changer, honestly. It's interesting on this point. I mean if you see the role of founders having in the region – so if you say Judaism, well debatable – Abraham and Moses, right, even say in the combination then. It's interesting to track the religion that follows Abraham and Moses. If you just take Abraham out, it's got a very different feel again. And just put Abraham –

Darrell Bock: Put Torah in there and you've got a different feel.
Alan Hirsch: Yeah, Torah, that's right. It's a different feel. So but let's say with Buddhism, why it tracks back from Buddha. So what you say is Buddha here sets the agenda for the movement that claims his name, and the same would be true of Confucius. But, certainly, you can in the case of Islam, the founder sets the tone of the movement that claims the name. He defines the way it should shape itself. So the founders play very, very critical roles. And, for us, Jesus changes things.

Darrell Bock: Yeah, and one difference that I often talk about with students is that you can have Confucius or Buddha or Mohammed. They are guides. They point the way to God in one sense or another. But what's unique about what Jesus is claiming is he's at the center of what's happening. I mean it isn't, "I'm going to tell you what the teaching is and you follow it." No, there's a personal dimension involving him and who he is and then trying to replicate who he is, it's just very central to what's going on.

Alan Hirsch: Yeah, it's pretty radical, isn't it? I mean it's like – I think it was one Anglican archbishop who said – I can't remember his name right now – he said, "It's not so much that Jesus is like God –" and that's true though – "but that God is like Christ, and in him there is no unChristlikeness." So have you noticed, well, in John, of course, Jesus said – Andrew says, "Show me the Father."

Darrell Bock: That's right.

Alan Hirsch: He says, "Dude –"

Darrell Bock: That's right. You've been with me and you don't get it.

Alan Hirsch: You don't get it. If you see me you have seen the Father. And he says elsewhere, "I and the Father are one," and we think that's quite a strong claim.

Darrell Bock: Yeah. I think it's interesting. We're made in God's image, but there's a sense in which God has imaged himself in Jesus. And so we get the model in the mirror, incarnated. That's very different than everything else.
Alan Hirsch: Yeah, absolutely right. So we'd say – this one comes from the incarnational mission stuff which we mentioned there. It's interesting how the idea of the incarnation, that God would become one of us, should – it is what Lewis rightly calls the grand miracle. It's the miracle behind all the other ones. And it is absolutely foundational, and for us evangelicals, we very, very seldom pay attention to it.

Darrell Bock: And it really is an offense to other monotheistic religions. I mean classic Judaism reacts to the idea that God could take on flesh and, certainly, Islam reacts.

Alan Hirsch: Oh yeah.

Darrell Bock: I get emails, regularly, where I'm interacting with people who are Muslim in background and their communication to me, "You mean God sleeps. He goes to the bathroom." They very – they put it in very crass terms to try and drive the point home how offended they are and the idea that God –

Alan Hirsch: And that's how shocking it is. Yes, indeed.

Darrell Bock: That's right, exactly. That's the point. So well, that's step one. Let's talk about discipleship. And I'd like for you to contrast formation as you see it normally happening in the apprenticeship you call disciple making, or perhaps the contrast between what you call genuine discipleship and mere church attendance. How is disciple making more than simply mastering content? That's what I'm really driving at.

Alan Hirsch: And I mean it's a huge issue, isn't it? I think how we define discipleship I think matters hugely. And it's interesting, though, because I mean I get often asked the question, "Well, how do we do it?" right. So, and I find it quite remarkable, because of all the things we've handed down, I think we do some quirky stuff, right.

Darrell Bock: Right. That's right.

Alan Hirsch: I mean those are the things we don't even know what –

Darrell Bock: And we – I've been doing discipleship for a while, right?
**Alan Hirsch:** You'd think that of all the traditions that we would have mastered, actually, over 2000 years of Christian history, we would have mastered this one, and we still don't know how to do it. And I think it's really, it's possibly, quite possibly the most important thing in terms of how we, the church, actually engages.

**Darrell Bock:** That's right because you can't do anything else without it.

**Alan Hirsch:** So here's the thing. So my definition is not particularly highfalutin, as you say in Texas. It is simply becoming more and more like Christ, in the image of God in Jesus – or it becomes the image of man. So we become more like him, it's the imitation of Christ, but then his Christ life in me. So it's very much a formation in Christ.

And so to become like Jesus, we must become little Jesus. It's kind of quite a simple definition, but it actually changes the game again. It's not simply understanding information about him. It's actually being formed so that I become more and more and more like him.

I should be more like him this year than I was last year. And next year, I should be more like him again. And the church's job is to hold me accountable to that. And we hold each other accountable to that. It seems to me that this is how Jesus gets into his church. And his ethos actually is embedded into his community.

**Darrell Bock:** And one of the things that I sense from the reading is that, well, you talk about that happening not in the context, the kind of four walls of the classroom, but it's really got to be connected to life, the way we live, the way we engage, where we are.

And so the disciple making – in fact, in the last part of the book where there are models of the way in which churches are missional, part of the point, it seems to me, is almost as if it's driving people out of the pew – if I can say it that way – and into the world so they can be and reflect Christ where they are, and also where God can reach them; how to do that in the midst of the world. Is that fair?
**Alan Hirsch:** Absolutely right. And I think that part of us, I think, we are very, very attached to a Western or a particularly harmonistic understanding of knowledge, that if you get the idea you have it. And then when you – it changes you. And I'm afraid it doesn't work like that. In the Hebraic, we read about Hebrews, so in the Hebraic understanding – and I follow the heart here as a kind of good clue to what we call a biblical testimony. How do we know if something is true or not. I think the heart that is – that I – there's a heart knowledge that cannot be gained by the head. There's a head knowledge of something, what's on your mind, so that the mind can understand things that the heart cannot. But then there's obedience, which is the will or our bodies or our hands. And obedience delivers a knowledge of God that cannot be obtained by any other means.

**Darrell Bock:** So you learn on the job so to speak.

**Alan Hirsch:** Yeah. And it's the combination of all three that's going to come together to create a work there. I like us to think of venn intersecting circles. I think that's where discipleship is delivered. It's kind of heart, head and hand. And it's not one to the exclusion of the other. It's all three engaging each other.

**Darrell Bock:** So a church that simply huddles and gathers really can't get there in some ways.

**Alan Hirsch:** No. No, because it's disobedient. And we in the West – and I think Dallas Willard – he died recently. Right, honor to him. He would say that we were educated beyond our capacity to obey. And I think that's pretty true. We know more in our heads than we do in our lives. And yet our lives communicate our message.

**Darrell Bock:** Yeah. If we applied half of what we knew, we might be better off.

**Alan Hirsch:** Yeah, indeed. And you use a fancy word for this and we'd say, "It's orthodoxy, which is right belief; orthopraxy, which is right behavior, and orthopathy, which, of course, Jonathan Edwards was about and all that, the right to think of passion or bringing our hearts to God" and putting out our emotive life. And we are motivated through emotion, and Edwards understood that pretty well.

**Darrell Bock:** So if you segregate those things, the danger is that you actually end up being disconnected and out of balance.
Well, let's talk about mission a little bit. And I want you to talk about how you think mission has been marginalized in the church and how we get it back into its rightful place. And in asking this question, I have in mind the diagram that you had where mission goes from being a department in the church kind of set off over here with other things happening, to the idea of mission being at kind of the top of the diagram and feeding everything else the church is doing.

So with that kind of picture and background, how is – and at one point, you make the statement, "Mission without Jesus is a terrible Lord," which I think is an interesting expression and an interesting picture.

So I'm assuming that what you mean by that is that mission as a task of some kind or an assignment or a thing I accomplish, as opposed to being a love, an expression of love and an expression of Jesus and his presence, actually engaging people with trying to model and reflect who Jesus is. So when you say that the church follows mission, what does that mean in terms of culture and engagement?
Alan Hirsch: Right. And he doesn't ask the easy question. Okay, so I think this is actually a huge paradigm shift for the church in the West. For so long we have managed to pretty much beget a mission from our consciousness. Only I believe pretty much – I'm pretty sure I'm right on this, that Calvin's Institutes, cover to cover, it doesn't mention mission once. It doesn't feature in his thinking.

There's something about reaching Islam. But it's hardly in terms of what we see as the great commission today. And so it doesn't feature any – his thinking about the church. So the churches basically assume that everyone is Christian. It's what kind of Christian are you? Calvinist? Are you Lutheran or are you a Roman Catholic?

And pretty much that has marked our understanding of – I think for a long, long time. So the way we formed our understanding of the church is basically objective mission. Mission becomes a subcommittee, and I think we're certain to guess about 2 percent of people could care less and they're – it's usually concerned with overseas.

And with the great revolution – and I think this was funny. It was the 20th century rediscovery. Increasingly Karl Bart and others began to kind of talk about the missio Dei, which, of course, began to say that – no, actually, maybe mission is not external to God. It's intrinsic to who he is, right, so.

Darrell Bock: It's kind of in the Great Commission.

Alan Hirsch: It's in the Great Commission, but it's actually part of who God is.

Darrell Bock: Exactly.

Alan Hirsch: I'm saying we've made a function of the church. But actually we say God sent the Son. The word, sent, of course, is missio, where we get our mission concept. So we're saying that God sent the Son. The Son is both sent and sending. So the Father and – so the Son participates, or the Father participates in the Son's sentness. And then they, together, send the Spirit, then we discover the Spirit is sent. He's that missionary. And then he says, "As the Father sent me, so I'll send you." So he says, actually, we're all sent. So we say that sentness is intrinsic to God. It's part of the doctrine of God.
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Darrell Bock: It's even as far back as Abraham. I mean Abraham is sent to go to the land, and the whole point of gathering the people was so that there's a people who can exemplify to the rest of the world – and they're supposed to be sent as well – to impact the world. And, of course, the Messiah comes through that. So it's literally through the whole – so the point you're making here is that rather than the church being something that defines mission, mission is something that defines what the church is.

Alan Hirsch: Yeah. And very practically it means this, is that we don't frontload our ecclesiology, our understanding of the church when we engage in culture, particularly on non-Christian people because then we simply impose our understanding or our cultural expression. That's what the Jews tried to do in Jerusalem upon the Galatian people. This is incarnationally impulsive, which is connected with it.

What Paul would argue then – in missiologically reading the Book of Galatians, he would say this, is that actually the Galatians have a right to follow Jesus in ways that are Galatian and consistent with their own culture. They don't have to become Jews in order to follow Jesus.

And we defend that as the right of every people to have a church or a community of faith that is consistent with their own culture. When we frontload our ecclesiology, we impose our forms of culture – assuming that they are normative for everyone – and we pretty much have done that up to now. So when we say mission precedes the church, it's simply saying you're going among a group of people, and once you're there – you can only really answer it truly once you're there. They ask, "What is community? What is church for this people group?" And then you articulate it into the community.

Darrell Bock: And that's why there's a variety of forms that we see in the New Testament because there isn't this imposition of one size fits all.

Alan Hirsch: That's' right.

Darrell Bock: You've made an observation that I think is huge and I don't want to let slip away. It's a sociological observation that's important, and it has to do with the way Calvin didn't approach and discuss mission. And I think that what's going on here, and I think this is important to understand –

Alan Hirsch: At least it's not one of the most important.
Darrell Bock: Yeah. But it's a great example. He lived in the middle of Europe in which the culture was driven very much by a Judeo Christian – what I'll call veneer. And the assumption was that the culture at the largest levels, that this is the way society ought to be. It ought to have this dimension in it. One of the things that scares me about what we're doing today – even if we move back to the reformers and look to them, which is the healthy thing to do – is that that world and that assumption doesn't exist anymore.

Alan Hirsch: And that's why change is so necessary.

Darrell Bock: That's right. And so, if you fail to see that and you simply go back to the reformers, you will go back and go backwards as opposed to going forward. You've got to realize how the context around you has changed. It's not the same one that Calvin addressed.

Alan Hirsch: So we call this – I don't think it's in On the Verge, but I call it, in other books, a radical traditionalism. That is all organizations – this recalling Max Weber’s idea that you return to your founding ethos, rediscovered and reinterpreted for your context. Like the beetle, for instance, where it disappears – the Volkswagen Beetle.

We were coming into the '70s or the '80s, I don't know. But it pops up again in the middle of the '90s. Is it a Beetle? Oh, yeah, I guess it is. It's a different one. So what they did is actually they picked up what is core to what they were about and they reinterpreted it. Now, that's important for organizations.

But in times of radical shift, like we're experiencing now where the church is increasingly and fundamentally being marginalized from the center – which I think is a good thing, personally – we need to go far more radical than simply the founders of our organizations. We go back to our founder, capital F. And I call this not reformation, but refounding.

Our founder must be found in us. In other words, this is the re-Jesus factor. We go back to Jesus and we calibrate back to him. We reboot the system back to him. So we make sure that we are consistent with who Jesus is, and then we build again from there. And I think we do this again and again.

Darrell Bock: And the danger is that we might try and recalibrate Jesus, but if we recalibrate Jesus with the reformers or any period as really the driving force, you really don't end up recalibrating back to Jesus.
Alan Hirsch: That's right. We recalibrate Jesus to be like us.

Darrell Bock: That's right.

Alan Hirsch: I think it was Voltaire who said that, "God made us in his image and we returned the favor." So he ends up looking like us.

Darrell Bock: Yeah. It's an important point. And I think that sometimes people don't get it. And because they don't get it and they end up landing in the wrong place when they go to make change. Because they think that the best way to go change – to make change is to simply go back. And that usually isn't going to do it.

Well, let me shift again here and talk about apostolic genius a little bit. We've gone through the pieces; Jesus is Lord, disciple making, missional-incarnational impulse, apostolic environment, organic systems, really emphasizing decentralization, communitas. Most of these make instant sense it seems to me.

But the one that I think might struggle with getting their hands around and understanding that really does seem to be important in what you're saying, is the idea of apostolic environment. What exactly is that and how does Ephesians 4:7-11 fit into that apostolic environment? And my simple way of saying this is it multi-gifted players, people being gifted differently, side by side, all in the game, is that kind of the way to think about it.

Alan Hirsch: That's certainly a way to think about it. But I think what I would – I'd like to suggest is something – this is interesting, and if I may spend just a little more minutes with it. I think it's very important. It's interesting. Here we have a major piece of Pauline doctrine, right. It's a huge story about Scripture in what we might say is the constitutional – at least Paul's constitutional document of the church. It's Paul's best thinking about what he thinks about the church.

Darrell Bock: Now, you're talking about the Book of Ephesians.

Alan Hirsch: Ephesians, of course, yes.

Darrell Bock: Yeah.
Darrell Bock: Medium home, 75 – 50 to 75 at a pop.

Alan Hirsch: That's right. And there might have been 20 across the city, right. They would hand the book around from church to church and they would read it out. So the people receiving this truth are just the people of God. Nothing fancy about them at all, right. And here you're getting – in Verses 1 to 6, you get one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of us all and he's Lord of all.

This is – it's confessional basis, it's monotheistic and we find our link in the one God. All people will assume that is true of all time. And then we go through what I call APEPT that he's giving some to be. In effect, he says in Verse 7, "It was he who gave some to be," and there it's indicative – "he gave some to be –" a very strong verb – "to each one of us –" hekastos," right – so here's Jesus cutting the cake and he's dishing out the goodies, right.

And he goes on to, essentially, the giftings and all that. "He gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers," right. And then he goes on to say in Verses 12 to 16 – it says, "so that you might mature, so you might be built up and no longer be tossed around every wind of doctrine," not whimsical, each part connected to the other and each to the whole.

Darrell Bock: And there's no way it happens unless everybody's connected to everybody.

Alan Hirsch: That's right. So what we have generally tended to do is that we've taken – yes, we believe in the first section and we believe in the last section that describes the church, as we should. But we've messed around with that middle piece, right. And I want to say it as a missional thing. I'm not talking about charismatic gifts. I think it's the functions of the church or it's the ministry of God's people, and it distributes out in fivefold form. We can say Jesus – and I think this is the kicker for me. Because we say that Jesus is an apostle here—he founded a religion, he is the sent one, sentness, the same way as a prophet. You see that.

Darrell Bock: Exactly.
So a prophet is a prophet. Yeah, I guess he's a prophet, very much so, right. Evangelist, yeah. He is the good news, right. Is he a shepherd? He is called the Good Shepherd, right. Is he a teacher? No brainer. So actually Jesus' ministry can be seen as fivefold form. And yet, the beauty of this thing, this passage you can see the ministry of Christ expressing itself through the body of Christ and it prisms out in fivefold form because they are his people.

And I think that if we want to be the church that Jesus intended, we cannot simply do it on a shepherd-teacher model, which is what we've done. Now, here's, for me, what got me. When you look at movements that change the world around – that's where I started. How do you grow from 25,000 to 20 million? In every case – and I make this as a categorical statement – every case that I can tell, there's never been a movement that went into exponential growth that didn't have at least a fivefold ministry operative.

It doesn't happen. So it seems to me an absolutely foundational aspect of the ministry of the church. If you want a missional church, you have to have a missional ministry to go with it. And that I think has to be at least fivefold form and distributed among the people of God.

So not centralized in one person or not centralized in a select group, but really the community being active.
The Table Podcast  Misssional Churches with Alan Hirsch

**Alan Hirsch:** Yes. So but some people might embody it better than others. So I say it this way: You might say, "Are we all called to the sentness of the church or the apostolicity of the church, apostolate?" Yes. We all participate in that, but some of us are set aside. They're actually good at it and called to actually guide that piece. We're all called the prophet.

Prophets guard the relationship between God. They're covenant people. They maintain that kind of relationship that God has with his people and representing – don't care much what you think about things. They care more that we're God sent. Some people – we're all called to do that, but some of us do it better than others. So some of us embody that ministry better than others.

We're all called to share faith; we're all called to be evangelists, but some of us suck at it, or some of us are better than others and they'd be evangelists. And so we're all called to care, but some of us are pastors. We're all called to teach in some way, but only some of us are teachers.

So you can see those as functions of the church, but that, really, people embody it differently. And so I don't believe in the offices. I think it's not the term I would use. But I think they are vocations there. There's something about it that is – that defines who we are.

**Darrell Bock:** So that's the core example. Of course, if we were to go to the other passages where giftedness is listed and where it talks about what the Spirit has given to the church, there are additional roles that people perform that fill out the community and make it dynamic and make it able to respond. But those five you're saying are really driving because they really do focus, don't they, on the way the church interacts with the culture that it's sent to.

**Alan Hirsch:** Yes. And so as two Jewish geeks here, let's play the geek thinking. So I think that the way there's a – the word – so for the calling you've received is a hint to what Paul is aiming at in Ephesians. And then there's “called to be,” which is an indicative. So I think there's something more about our identity at play in Ephesians 4. When we see in the – 1 Corinthians passage, for instance, they've seen it's a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, not a gift from Jesus. And it seems that those come and go.

**Darrell Bock:** Yeah, and that's driven by the nature of the problem that he's discussing too.
Alan Hirsch: That's right. So it seems that the Spirit gives that and then he withdraws it. It doesn't ever become your identity. It's sort of like if I was a carpenter I'd have a toolbox, a certain toolbox. And you look in my toolbox, well, I got a saw, I got a hammer, I got the basic tools. If I was a dentist, I'd have a different toolbox.

It seems to me if I was an evangelist, my toolbox is different than a teacher's toolbox. And I think the charismatic gifts of Corinthians, for instance, I think are toolbox gifts, whereas I think Ephesians is more vocational.

Darrell Bock: Core. They're core.

Alan Hirsch: Yeah, that's the way I find it.

Darrell Bock: Okay, good. That helps us. Now, let's talk about activating latent potential. Because, obviously, part of what you're dealing with is Jesus has given these gifts and enablements. When I think of giftedness or the roles of the church, I like to talk about enablement.

I like to use Paul's words in Romans, that we have the power to walk with God and be who God has created us to be. So we're thinking about empowerment, but we're also thinking about a potential that's kind of latent. It's there, but using it and getting to it and making it work is a whole different deal. So I sense that you see the church as kind of as a smoldering entity. When I was originally thinking this, I was thinking of a volcano getting ready to explode.

Alan Hirsch: It's a great image.

Darrell Bock: Man, that's a powerful image.

Alan Hirsch: That's exactly what I think about.

Darrell Bock: Okay. Full of potential to be released, but pent up. So how does one get to the place where the potential's released?

Alan Hirsch: Well, now look at history on this one, right. And actually the most foundational – what really struck me. And for those who might have even bothered to read Shaping Things to Come, which is a kind of a somewhat more revolution. It takes – bring it down, you know, so we were really angry young guys and we felt urgent.
The Table Podcast: Missional Churches with Alan Hirsch

*Darrell Bock:* So that was an early book.

*Alan Hirsch:* Yeah, it's an early book. When I began to look at the movements, I wanted to get in under the hood of the next boom, you know. And what really struck me, Darrell, and it changed me fundamentally, is that what I began to discover is actually Jesus has given us everything we need to get the job done. We don't have to import anything. Jesus designed us for world transformation.

*Darrell Bock:* Ephesians 1:3. Have been given every Spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

*Alan Hirsch:* I didn't even recognize that. But it's true. So in China, for instance, I mean China has the church apparently from the early centuries when Thomas' mission to the East, he established a small witness, goes to the other Asians. But the church they really get was from the Europeans as they colonized.

So the biggest church in China at the time of Mao Tse-tung's revolution was its Roman Catholic, very hierarchical, very highly centralized controlled church. And in Mao Tse-tung, it's completely obliterated and in two or three years. And then the Cultural Revolution. I mean it was obliterated, and some of the most severe persecution we know. People like us were out of the state. All buildings were confiscated and missionaries were thrown out and the church was decimated. All you've got now is a group of peasants. And under those conditions, those Chinese peasants – something happened. They go from 2 million in the year 1950, from what we can tell the best estimate's now about 120 million. This is 70 years later and how did they do that? They are deinstitutionalized. So all this stuff that we think is needed…

*Darrell Bock:* All the structure that we think is necessary.
And the only answer, again, from the phenomenological perspective is that it had to have been there already. The phenomenon that appeared in China is phenomenologically precisely the same as the early church if you distinguish their difference, but they're non-essentials. So the phenomena are exactly the same.

And then I began to look down through all that in history when you see that kaboom and the phenomenon is the same. So I called that book The Forgotten Ways because, actually, these are our ways. We forget them. They're kind of in the basement or in the attic and all the layers and conditions overlay it and we forget what is essential. The catalytic moment of adapt or die often catalyzes that change. It doesn't always have to be that way. In the case of –

So you're saying sometimes it takes a real crisis for us to rediscover what's been forgotten.

Yes. Or in the case of like a really passionate call like a Wesley. That phenomenon has all the phenomena there, and it's not driven by persecution, although there was some from the religious kind of maybe, but nothing death defying. But it definitely is the same phenomenon. So we saw that there's two types of adaptive challenges. Adapt or die, that's China, right. They adapt or they disappear. Or compelling opportunities, the food’s better in the next valley, it's a good reason to move. Go get it.

And I think, actually, nowadays we are experiencing both. There is a sense where the church in the West is in an adapt-or-die scenario. If you look at Europe, at my country, there's no doubt about it. And it's coming, right. So that's a reason to change, but there's also a wonderful opportunity nowadays. Honestly, I think it's wide open for us to engage it. And I think that's a good reason to change as well.
Darrell Bock: Now, your last thing has got me going in a different direction than what I was planning to do. So I'm trying to decide what to do.

When we are in an adapt-or-die mode, there's a sense in which we live in a world in which most people don't even know what we're talking about. They're unchurched, what we call them in the States, the unchurched. People who have never darkened the door of a church. They don't know what a church is about, et cetera. They're values are formed – whatever – where they've come from, the church has had little or nothing to do with it.

Now, this is one of the changes – back to the point I was making earlier – we lose the Judeo Christian veneer of our society which informs the way people may have been shaped, even though they may never have walked into church, and so something else is forming them. And now, we've got this message, and part of what I'm hearing you say is that the church has to adjust to the fact that that is our largest audience now.

Alan Hirsch: Yeah.

Darrell Bock: Which changes the way you got to communicate because you can't assume, the way I like to say it, you can't assume they know Genesis from Malachi.

Alan Hirsch: And Malachi from Shmalachi either.

Darrell Bock: Exactly right.

Alan Hirsch: Who's Malachi?

Darrell Bock: That's right. So I those are all foreign words. So how does the church get into that place and into that world?
Alan Hirsch: Yeah. Well, you see this is why I think the missional conversation is the one that actually hosts the future of the Western church. Two-thirds of the world is doing pretty well without us, but the Western church's future, I think, is caught up somewhere in that umbrella of ideas that we put under the word, missional, where we must now adopt a missionary stance in relationship to our context.

We can no longer assume that we have the same language to communicate with each other meaningfully. And I would say that all mission in the Western context now is fundamentally – and you need to consider this – is fundamentally cross-cultural. That is, they are people who are culturally distant from us.

They are people within our orbit and in On the Verge we suggest there's a 60/40 at play, that there are about 40 percent of Americans that are within the orbit, culturally speaking, of the church as we know it, and that we should fish in that pool. There's no question. But we're all competing for the same slice of the pie.

Darrell Bock: Right, right.

Alan Hirsch: It’s that other 60 percent that we need to be attentive to. And that 60 percent is comprising of Muslims through to Jews, through to homosexuals and all the other stuff and sub-cultures –

Darrell Bock: All the cross-cultures, all the diversity and plurality that we see.

Alan Hirsch: Every nation is represented in this country.

Darrell Bock: Exactly. In most elementary schools, that locally. That's the point.

Alan Hirsch: Oh, my goodness. Yes, it's huge. And so now, that is a different context and we need to engage them on their turf. We're the sent ones and we go to them. Our job is to communicate meaningfully on their terms, this is incarnation, right. So it's a great chance to us to kind of move out of our comfort zones and learn again.
Darrell Bock: It's a reversal of the era. Sometimes, we think, well, the way in which you do evangelism is you bring them to church or you bring them to – you bring them here. Well, in fact, what you're saying is no, that's not going to work. The arrow's got to go in the other direction. We've got to go there, and go there with ears and understanding and engagement. This is obviously what I'm all about. And engagement that almost – and this is the trick, and this is about what I think is hard for people – that immerses without being immersed, okay.

Alan Hirsch: And hold onto essentials, like and then you would say that Jesus is Lord. And there are some – I think the Bible provides us one, because that's the Bible's context, right.

Darrell Bock: Absolutely.

Alan Hirsch: So actually they’re giving us tools that actually are much more consistent with our context now. And we can take our cue from how they engaged, and Paul particularly is the cross-cultural missionary and will teach us again. I mean Paul in Athens is different, isn't he, to Paul in Jerusalem. He's got his King James out versus there he's interpreting the idolatry.

Darrell Bock: Exactly.

Alan Hirsch: Our idols indicate what people think is meaningful. It's what they worship, right. And we say it's an offense to God, but it's a clue to what they think is important. And I think analysis of people's idolatry is a clue to how you engage people. So say – I said, really, you go into context and the one thing you ask is, "What is church?" And more foundationally is what is good news for those people groups?

Now you cannot know that until you do some listening and observing as Paul does in Athens. You look at the idols, you look at the art forms where there's a struggle for meaning, a search for – existential search, a religious quest, interpret it and you kind of find a way that the gospel makes a connection with that group.
Darrell Bock: And what I think is interesting about the New Testament situation that we are going back to is that the church at the time wasn’t just a minority. It was a miniscule minority. I mean it was, in terms of the percentage of total population, next to nothing. And yet, they were able to establish who they were in their identity and engage the culture in such a way that they became attractional in both positive and negative ways, because part of what created the persecution is some people got what they were saying and didn't want anything to do with it. And other people got what they were saying and said, "That's different. I want a little bit of that."

Alan Hirsch: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. So the quality of life, the embodiment of the gospel, the capacity to suffer well. And now, of course, Dawson in his other book – Taking Cities for God, I think it's called – talks about in the early church when all the pagans left Rome and, of course, the two great plagues, we see a spirit of growth in the church. Well, that was funny.

So he looked under the hood of what was going on there. He discovered this, is that the pagans took to the hills, abandoning their sick. The Christians stayed in town to look after the sick. Many of them died, actually. The pagans come back and say, "What kind of people are these that stay and look after our sick?" And I mean, of course, the church experiences a radical influx into the church as a result.

There seems to be something – that kind of witnessing community, that alternative society idea, is really where we have to recover that. At the moment, most people look and most indicators say we're not fundamentally different in our divorce rates, adulteries and all that stuff, to the world around about us. This is why discipleship becomes a fundamental thing is that that's where we raise the bar in what it means.

Darrell Bock: So if we look like we're just an option among many and there really isn't much difference between them, then who's attracted.

Alan Hirsch: Well, I'm saying like it's, "Well, why would I bother. It just seems a lot more hard work. And there's some nasty people around here. I don't want to hang out with those guys. The pub is a much more friendly place," they might as well say.
Darrell Bock: Yeah. But I'm going to shift gears and take a moment – I don't normally do this. But I think it's important for this particular topic. I want you to address church leaders a little bit. Pastors, people who are thinking about that, people who are charged with the responsibility of leading organizations and maybe thinking about the shift. But they go, I mean obviously we're recommending some of the stuff that you've talked about to get people thinking in this regard.

But here's the question that I think I have. Most church leaders have studied theology, but they haven't studied culture or sociology, what you have called phenomenology. We don't do that, generally speaking. So if a person were to say, "All right, I want to learn how to get under the hood," what recommendations would you give them for how to become a student of culture, how to create the categories for them to begin to think in theses ways?

Alan Hirsch: Wow. That's an interesting question. I think probably it's reading outside of our – I mean having a good education, I actually think that sociology – I'm not a trained sociologist and I'm not even a trained phenomenologist. I think I'm ADD out there.

Darrell Bock: You've just absorbed it all.

Alan Hirsch: Ooh, the pretty pattern, right.

Darrell Bock: Yeah, I'm ADD, too, so I understand your guilt. Go ahead.

Alan Hirsch: I think ADD's predictive thinking. Now, having said that, I now know what it is and I've tried to kind of get to grips with it. But I try and read outside of my disciplines that I normally would have – you know, I'm comfortable in theology and I love it. But it's important to read people who maybe I sometimes disagree with. But in actually engaging them, I actually read – learn why I actually believe. Sometimes I find that very invigorating.

And then just the other things is what we say is the listening process in culture. Suspending our judgments. Again, like I said, on of, I think, the biggest clues to people's hearts and to what they think is important and to their spirituality is the idolatry, which is the false worship. And if we looked at it from purely a kind of prophetic edge, then we're going to have to judge it because God judges it.
Darrell Bock: Yes, that's wrong. It's sin.

Alan Hirsch: But, actually, G.K. Chesterton said, "A man knocking on the door of a brothel is looking for God." Chesterton. Lewis says that, "All our vices are virtues gone wrong," and I think we need to learn that. We need to kind of observe that people's sins are clues to what they're looking for. It's looking for the right thing in the wrong places. Don't judge it so much as look into it and see how the gospel addresses it.

Darrell Bock: Why would someone go there versus the gospel kind of thing?

Alan Hirsch: Yeah, that's right. So I think we need to, and be attentive to the subtext that goes on. Movies are great clues to this. And I think learn to exegete a movie and what's really being said underneath the movie. Talk about it with brothers and sisters, but also talk about it with nonChristian people. Say, "Well, what did you get out of that movie?" And it's interesting because I think most of that is about mythos and mythos story, our most fundamental stories, tell us a huge amount of information about what people think and how they feel.

Darrell Bock: Yeah, I did a series of podcasts with Reg Grant, who does media arts here, and we were talking about this as that there are stories that drive people. And if you really look at movies now, some movies are just raw escapism. They just want to pull you out of – that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about the ones that really cause people to sit and think about life. And if you examine them and assess them and deconstruct them, then you see why is it the people are drawn to this. What is it about the story that draws – I'm think of the movie that won the Academy Award this year, I think for a foreign film, which I haven't seen but which I have an interest in seeing.

I think it's about an old couple in which one of the people has Alzheimer's. And the whole story is about the beauty of caring for someone who is deteriorating and facing their mortality. And it touched a nerve.
Alan Hirsch: Of the human condition, yeah. And our empathy, our capacity to empathize with other human beings in their suffering, and in their love and in their brokenness and in their search and in their longing. I mean I think this is what I love about Jesus. I think, honestly, I think Jesus gets right to the issues very quickly. The woman at the well, for instance. You know that she's trying to find identity in men. She's had a number of – and she's got another one, you know. And here she is like flirting with him.

He addresses her real needs, but he looks beyond what is appearing to what is really being done. And I think all human beings long for meaning, I think, long for connection. And ultimately – and this is Augustinian view – our hearts are one vast yearning for God. But we look for it in the wrong places.

Darrell Bock: Made in his image. It makes sense that we would seek him.

Alan Hirsch: Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in God.

Darrell Bock: Well, I think that this is important. I often say we do a pretty good of teaching people how to go from the Bible to life, but we don't do such a good job of going from life to the Bible. And to be able to switch hit as a church leader is actually very, very important.

Alan Hirsch: Oh, indeed. It's huge.

Darrell Bock: And so moving from where life is, where the culture is, what it's doing and we're not just talking about assessing that, pointing the finger and saying, "Oh, that's right," or "That's wrong. That's sin," but understanding what's motivating and driving that. How does that work? And how do you get into that mechanism and kind of pull it apart and say, "That's not the only way to put this together and that's not the only direction to go"? It seems to me is at the core of being a good leader.

Alan Hirsch: I think so. Even learning what we mean by evangelism. I think it was Epictetus, the philosopher who said, "It is impossible to teach a man what he thinks he already knows." And so a lot of actual leaning involves, first of all, unlearning. And the assumptions we bring to things might not necessarily be the biblical ones. We just assume they're right.
Darrell Bock: And we're running real tight for time here, so I need to sit down and figure out what's the last thing I want to ask you. Here's one. At one point, you dealt with five questions to assess what's going on. It's kind of a shame that we're at the end and I'm getting to this. And they are what are we doing, why are we doing it, how are we doing it, when are we successful, and where is God taking us. I think those are great questions to ask.

I actually don't have anything to ask about them because they're so clear and such a good list.

But it struck me in reading this that there's one that I thought that could be added, and I wanted to get your comment on it. And it was this. Should we be doing this? And, if not, then what? Okay. In other words, sometimes what I see churches doing sometimes is to add programs. "Okay, this is good. This is why we do it. It's really great." And what happens is the church multiplies its programs, but then it's got limited resources, and so in adding its programs and stretching wider, wider, wider, it gets thinner and thinner as it does that unless things go. So I suspect that part of change is making that assessment.

Alan Hirsch: I think it was – no, it was Peter Senge, the guy who kind of came up with what's been called learning systems, learning series, learning organizations as you call it. A wonderful man. He said this. He says, "L –" you got to think about this as a kind of "L equals P plus Q." Learning takes place when programming is subjected to questioning. And he says it's the kind of questions you ask that lead you on the learning journey. So I think the question leads on a quest, and that if you ask it well and do some depth questioning, actually that's how learning takes place. It's critiquing what we currently do. Why do we do it? And sometimes people don't really know, "Well, because we've always done it that way.

Darrell Bock: We do it because we've always done it. Exactly.
Alan Hirsch: Well, somehow the tradition has told us to do it. Well, you know, you're letting the tradition do your thinking for you. And I mean this is all of us. You can pick on any of our traditions, but if you think Calvin, who was working out his stuff in the 16th century, can guide you into the 21st globalized context as a simple kind of formula, no, I don't think so. And that's what we call – it's acedia. It's slush. You're allowing other people in different years and times to do your thinking for you. And particularly in the time of crisis where we find the church has to really get to the core of things, we have to ask the right questions and go on a quest again. And it's not – it's all right. It's all right to question. There's nothing sacred about our forms and the things that we do. We can always do it better. And let's go on a quest and find out.

Darrell Bock: We know how this works. You, I'm sure, have been at meetings. I know I have, where you ask why do we do this, and what you get is the history. In the beginning, there was this.

Alan Hirsch: And God said.

Darrell Bock: Yeah, exactly. And we do this. But we're 20 years down the road now, and the question is do we still need that. Or did it meet a need for a time and did so wonderfully and people were blessed. But its time, it's since passed. Those are hard decisions to make because people become invested in their identity through the various programs that they associate with and that they become attached to.

Alan Hirsch: You'll love this one right here. “It's hard to get a man to understand something when their salary depends on their not understanding it.” So, actually, so many of the things we do, the ones that actually hold it, actually are so invested that it's very hard to ask questions of the very thing that you're vested in. But, yet, actually some of our deepest learning might take place in that.
Darrell Bock: And the way I like to talk about this when I talk about change is that when you deal with change people always initially feel you're taking something that's important away from them, so they feel robbed, if I can say it that way. That's the emotion.

So when you introduce change and you introduce the vision for change, it's very, very important to tell them what you are giving them and what they are gaining by the move, so they're willing to think about the exchange. Because if you don't get them to the point where they're willing to think about the exchange, they're holding on.

Alan Hirsch: Yeah, they are. Having a bigger why, having a bigger reason than the current ones we have, I think is a – and this is where I think good theology works for us. And communicating in such a way we can ask questions. It's prophetic call to ask questions.

But we also then go on a quest for learning, which is the apostolic alternative. But I think communicating in a way that people can really connect their hearts with it. I think it's a challenge, but I think it’s the leaders that have got to do that stuff.

Darrell Bock: Well, I'm wrestling with a pun here. I think we've gotten on the verge of our topic. And thinking about the missional church and what's involved with the dynamics of it. And I really do thank you, Alan, for taking the time to talk with us about this. I hope this has stimulated you in thinking about the issues associated with missional church, and I really do hope that you have benefitted from our conversation.

We thank you for joining us at The Table where we discuss issues of God and culture. And, today, we discussed the missional church, and our hope is is that you will have been encouraged to become more missional as the result.