

Apostolic Centers: Shifting the Church, Transforming the World with Alain Caron

 · 60mins

Glenn Bleakney 00:12

So let's just get right into our discussion. We were talking about apostolic centres tonight, and I know in your book, apostolic centres, shifting the church and transforming the world is the subtitle. Clearly you were on a journey, and you're not just a philosopher, you actually are a practitioner. You were involved in transitioning a local church into an apostolic centre. So why don't you tell us about that? What was that like for you? And how did the Lord put that in your heart?

Alain Caron 00:52

Well, let me first say, glenn, that it's an honour to speak in what you convene here, because I've been watching you for many years, and you're such a tremendous teacher yourself of the things of the kingdom that all the topics I'm going to bring, I know you teach even better than I, so just maybe for me to come and reinforce what you're already teaching and the people you're gathering. So let's go into that, because it is a history. It is actually not only for me, but this is something the Holy Spirit is doing in the whole world, in any nation that I'm going, and I've been in many, this is a reform that the Lord brings to his church. For me, it started in a very simple way. I was saved out of the drug world. I was a cocaine addict, radically saved by meeting Jesus in a tiny little church of about 2030 people. That church was so vibrant and anointed, but so small at the same time. And I stayed in that church with my wife. We grew there, we were well pastored, and I greet all the pastors here tonight. We are not against pastors, we are for pastors and for the whole body of Christ. And we love the church. And so we were well pastored, and we grew in that church. I started full time ministry one year and a half after I was out of the cocaine world, I was a cocaine dealer. I became the director of a christian school. And what happened is, twelve years after I was saved, the founding pastors asked me and my wife to take the church, to become the pastors of the church, as they were starting themselves to travel more and more, and they had now a vision that led them that way. So we took the church in 1999, by the way, I'm still in that church. I've never been in another church, except for preaching and visiting and building, but I'm still in the same church. I was saved, and so I became the pastor in 1999. And then the church started to grow from the faithful nucleus that those founding pastors had put in place.

And by the way, those founding pastors are still with us. They're still today on my team, my apostolic team. So it's a family. But the church started to grow and we were hungry. I was hungry for more. I loved the church. The church was good. It was steadily growing. But I wanted more. I think we all want more. And so what I had in my heart was to look at the book of acts. So in 2010 and 2011, for two years, we studied the book of acts from Sunday to Sunday. And what I discovered in that book was just revolutionising my conception of the church. It's in those two years that I discovered what I call today apostolic centres and the apostolic churches and the apostolic mandate. And on the tracks of Apostle Paul, I found that there was what I was looking for. So during those two years of teaching, teaching, teaching on the book of acts, every Sunday we were transformed. We were painting a picture that we started to desire, and we wanted to migrate toward that picture. And so at the end of 2011, I said to the church, I think it was the first Sunday of January or December 31, I said, we have become an apostolic centre. See, I didn't know it would become a term that now would be used. I was just speaking of my heart. We have become an apostolic centre, like the Church of Antioch. We want to be ascending base. And that's how it all started. And what happened is that a few months after that, Peter Wagner, whom you certainly know, came. I didn't know him. I had read one book by him ten years before that church quake, and he was introduced to me by a friend, Doug Schneider, in Oshawa, and he came to preach at our church. And I just explained to him our little journey. And I told him, I believe we have become an apostolic centre. And he was very excited. He said, this is a proof of something I was tracking. And then the rest is story. I wrote a book about our journey, apostolic centres, and then it started to be published and translated in different languages. I think it's in seven or eight languages right now. I started to travel, write more books, and we developed as an apostolic centre from that time.

Glenn Bleakney 05:57

Wow, that's amazing. Yeah. And of course, I've read your books and really enjoy them, and they benefited me so much, too. So I just wanted to thank you for writing those. Know, we've got people watching, Elaine, from all over the world right now, from Africa, different parts of Africa, from Singapore, the Philippines, of course, Canada, the USA, Australia, New Zealand. Anything I'm missing, if I'm missing your country, guys, just let us know where you are watching from and oh, Myanmar as well. Wow. So let's just talk a little bit about the difference between the church today, the conventional church today, and there are many great churches in the know, someone made a comment about their ministry being connected to gateway church out of Dallas. What a great church. Impacting nations, literally. So we're not here in any way to try to deride or speak down on churches, but what is the difference between the conventional church today and an apostolic church or an apostolic centre? And I know you talk in your book, you talk about apostolic churches and apostolic centres. So what's the difference between a conventional church and an apostolic church or an apostolic centre?

Alain Caron 07:26

Yes, well, there's a number we can identify. I'll start by maybe saying there is two great areas that we need to look for. One is a vision and a mandate. What is the mandate of the church? And then what is the structure of that church to carry that mandate? So what we see traditionally, conventionally in most churches is what we call a pastoral mode, which is a good church. This is the church I was born in and that saved me and kept me. A pastoral church is a church that the set man, the pastor, will do ministry to the congregation. So if you have a good pastor in place, which is the case, I believe in most churches, this is a good place to be. This is a place to be taken care of, to be protected and to receive food and teaching. This is a good place.

Glenn Bleakney 08:39

Right.

Alain Caron 08:39

A pastoral church is a place to gather the Christians and to have fellowship and take care of the congregation while you look at an apostolic model. The apostolic mandate is also the pastoral mandate, but you enlarge it to consider that the kingdom is centre. By the kingdom we mean that God needs to rule everywhere, not just in the church, the church being the vehicle for him to expand his kingdom in the earth. So when you have a clear apostolic mandate, then it means that you are no longer satisfied just to meet as a church and maintain the church. You want to see expansion, you want to see influence and impact in society and in the nations, so that God's kingdom will be known and will gain to bring glory to Jesus. So two different mandates. One is to take good care of the believers. The other is to make of the believers disciples that will be sent out and touch this world. In the apostolic mandate, it does not negate the pastoral mandate, it expands on it. For example, we know in Ephesians 4:11 that a fivefold team has been given to help the church to grow. And in that fivefold team there is no way, no place that it gives the preeminence to the pastor. The pastor is part of the team. If there would be an emphasis on some of those fivefold, it would have to be on apostles and prophets. Biblically, Ephesians 2:20 says, you have been built on the foundations of apostles and prophets, Christ being the chief cornerstone, one corinthians 12:28. And God gave the church first apostles, second prophet, third teachers and so on. So when we understand the format, now I'm getting in the structure, the structure to develop to maturity, the saints to bring Converts to discipleship. It needs a working of those fivefold gifts together. And then you have to talk of the role of the apostle and the prophets. Prophets. We talked a lot about them in the years. What is more new now is the apostles. And so we see that the role of the apostle in that team is to empower and organise and also be a father, to bring a cohesion so that we will not remain babies, but become mature sons and daughters. And this is how the kingdom can advance. If I can just mention that in the parables that Jesus gives in Matthew 13, in the second parable of the wheat and the

tears, Jesus says that he is sowing. And the seed this time is not the word of the kingdom, like in the first parable, but the seed this time. In that parable, the seed are the sons of the kingdom. So if we want to have sons, which speaks of maturity, we need to grow the body to maturity. And the picture for that is in Ephesians 4:11. So in an apostolic vision, you will find the influence of an apostle, but also a team around him. So the mandate will be clear to go and influence society for the kingdom of God. And the structure will be an apostolic team working together so that the whole body may grow and develop.

Glenn Bleakney 12:54

Wow. Yeah, that's powerful. Thank you for sharing that. That's something I really believe we've missed in the church. We have different churches in terms of the vision and the philosophy they have. We have churches that feel, well, if your church has a lot of people, then you must be compromising the truth. And we have megachurches that are very significant and influential in terms of having a lot of people, and just the very fact that there's all the numbers of people, that has clearly an influence. But when we look at the Bible, particularly the book of acts and the writings of Paul, we see a different paradigm, and I sometimes refer to it this way. We see clearly in Ephesians four, which you've already alluded to in verse eleven, God gave the fivefold to equip. So the saints, the believers, the disciples, would do the works of ministry, but also to grow into the fullness of the stature of Christ, to become mature sons. And Romans eight says that he's the first born among many and that we were predestined to be conformed to his image and likeness. But I think when we look at the mission that sometimes you, you know, we're trying to get a lot of people in our Sunday services, our weekend services, we preach the gospel to them and we get them saved. And yet in the New Testament, even though Jesus did preach to the multitudes, he did spend a lot of time with 70 and then twelve and of course even three. And I think the key here in this day in which we live in this Covid-19 season, where in many places of the world, most places of the world, we're not able to have mass gatherings, is shifting to an apostolic paradigm, which is more about equipping and releasing believers to be the ministers, to go out into the marketplace in the world, all the different spheres of society, to have that impact. So it's like the Lord is using this to recalibrate us back to the original apostolic mission. So when we talk about equipping saints, as Ephesians 4:12 talks about, what does that look like? What was Paul meaning when he talked about equipping there?

Alain Caron 15:36

Well, this is actually the topic that we need to really enter into. You see, we have been so used to think congregation, like you say, numbers, Sunday morning service, that we fail sometimes to see if this is efficient or not. You see, it's efficient for someone who is saved to join a good church. But is it efficient to bring the kingdom outside? Because the number does not necessarily reflect the power. You can have a church of 1000 people, for example, if the vision of that church is to gather people on Sunday, then they come

in, have the service and disappear for the rest of the week, and basically has not much impact on the city. Another church could be 300 people. And I'll come back now to the COVID soon, can be 300 people and constantly release people in different walks of life and have a great influence and start churches and home groups and all that. And so like you said, well, the Lord is alerting us, I believe, in this time of the COVID because the Lord is always able to use what the enemy does to turn it to his advantage. And he's saying to us, listen, I love my church, but this is time for a new development. Would you consider now that you have been restricted that the church can still go on. What has been restricted, basically is a format, is a Sunday morning format. That's basically it for the rest, it's open, you can go, you can make disciples, you can do all that maybe you were not doing. So what we have done in our church, for example, is that we have established, just three weeks ago, ten new house churches.

Glenn Bleakney 17:45

Wow.

Alain Caron 17:46

We have a system. We have a main apostolic centre with the apostolic team. We have two campuses also, which are more pastoral churches. We have churches aligned with us from different nations. But what we have done with a central church, which is several hundred people, we have now created house churches.

Glenn Bleakney 18:10

Wow.

Alain Caron 18:10

Because this is the way we need to go. Like, we have no choice. So we needed to consider that we established ten of them, which gather about 30 people each in the first time, and we still have to establish about ten more to bring everybody that we have. So the church needs to adapt, because Jesus has never been confined except for three days. And after three days, he came out and he reigns forevermore. So we are in his footsteps, and the way it's going for us is probably the best we have ever been through. Although people suffer, we don't want to see people sick. But in terms of church advancing, this is so exciting. We have opened to become the central place in our city to distribute food for the family that were fragilized by the COVID We are doing blood transfusion. Not transfusion, blood collect, like we serve practically. Then we dispatch in

houses. We go on Zoom. Like everybody. The church is growing, so we keep giving and nourishing other nations. This is a good time, really.

Glenn Bleakney 19:28

Wow. Thank you. Just quickly, let's expand on this a little bit. We have some pastors that struggle to really release people in their church, and there's a lot of reasons for that. I know that sometimes it's fear. I remember an occasion where a friend of mine was really concerned. He was very fearful about releasing people to minister in his church. He would train them and he would equip them, but he wasn't releasing them. Now, of course, the very word apostolic comes from the greek apostolos, which has the idea of sending forth or sending out. Like the scripture in John 20:27, when Jesus said, as the father sent me, so send I you. So as the father apostles me, I apostles you. So Jesus was a master sender. So what would you say to the body of Christ right now about our responsibility to disciple people and ultimately to send people out? Yeah, just speak into that, please.

Alain Caron 20:41

This is our great responsibility it's tied to bringing sons to maturity so that they can be seeds in the harvest, which is the field, which is the world that belongs to Jesus. But we need to be practical about it, you see, we need to see people in our congregation as potential leaders. First of all, the main leader of the church has to have that mindset, search, potential and capacity in everyone that's in front of you, because everyone needs to be developed. Do they show any sign that may look like one of the fivefold ministry, even if they may not be a set apart apostle or prophet or evangelist? Do they have characteristics that make you think about that? And how can you favour that, not only in schools, but in the daily life of the church? So what do we do? For example, for us, we just went through three days in his presence. About three, three weeks ago, three days in his presence. The numbers were limited. We were on Zoom and limited people on site. Nine opportunities to teach. How many of those spots did I take to teach? I took zero.

Glenn Bleakney 22:03

Wow.

Alain Caron 22:04

Because I want to train others.

Glenn Bleakney 22:06

Okay.

Alain Caron 22:06

Now I do teach on Sundays, so I had the opportunity to train nine different people to preach and teach.

Glenn Bleakney 22:14

Awesome.

Alain Caron 22:15

Every occasion I can find, I want them to develop. Then if one session I provoked the prophetic, so I called people and of course the Lord has to help. And I said, you come here, I pray the Lord will give you a word, speak a word to someone. So I provoked the prophetic. And then you watch it and you see, oh, this one is sensitive, this one. And then I put them in the hands of our main prophet and they develop them in the prophetic. So we have teacher, we have prophets. Then you try to identify those with an apostolic gift. Apostolic gifts are easy to spot. They always come to you with projects that are almost impossible to do, but they are pumped with their vision. They want to break outside the box. Some people think they are rebellious. They might be, but in other cases they are not rebellious. They are just full of an apostolic vision. So empower them and release them and you will develop these kind of gifts, you will train them. Teachers are easy to spot. They always start a conversation by the Bible says so. The people that the Bible says, I say, okay, you're a teacher. I need to find places where you can grow in your teaching gift. Other people are clearly pastoral. They come to you and they're always concerned for somebody, they're always concerned for that couple, for that family. They're always burdened. They might be intercessors too, but the pastoral want to take care of them. See, I'm not very pastoral. If you come to me with your problem after five minutes, I look around because I think I got it in five minutes and I see that you will need help. And I'm thinking, who can help this good person here? But a pastoral person loves that. A pastoral person will say, tell me more about it. And how was your dad when you were young? Can we meet another time to talk about it more? When you see people like that, you develop them as pastoral people, not necessarily set apart, pastor, but you need a pastoral team. So in our apostolic centre, the pastoral team is the largest team, because the body of Christ needs lot of good care. So you need a pastoral team. We have an apostolic team, we have a prophetic team, we have a team of teachers. So training people in the daily life and then encouraging them to use their gift and capacity outside of the local church or the apostolic centre, because that's the other problem. Everyone wants to serve the Lord inside the structure, exactly, of the building

of the church, but the structure is gone during the pandemic, so you can send them out, exercise your gift and your heart, where you work with your neighbours. Like, I'll tell you something. During the pandemic, we told people, put a sign and say, Jesus, you're welcome in this house. Put that outside of your house, so neighbours will know that your house is not confined to Jesus. And then one of them went in front of her block. It's a three or four stories apartment block, and she had the neighbours come out on the balcony and she was on the sidewalk. She was doing dances, like zoom dances, exercise. And then she preached the gospel and had them sing gospel songs. So the people had nothing to do. They're confined in their little boxes apartments. So it's all film. There's no limit to what you can do when you have vision, when you know you are to impact the world and not just keep people together, but to send them out. People are very creative.

Glenn Bleakney 26:05

Yeah, that's great. Let's just delve into that a little deeper. The apostolic mission and mandate. Jesus said to go into all the world. He said in Matthew 20 414, the gospel of the kingdom will be preached as a witness to all the nations. That means the ethnic groups of the world. And then the end will come. Matthew 20 818 through 20, he said, all authority has been given to me and to go and make disciples of the nations. And so when we talk about releasing and sending people out, of course we look to the great apostle himself, Jesus Christ, and we see his approach when he was on the know, I studied this and I basically have come to the conclusion that when Jesus first called these men to come and follow him, one of the things he did was the first thing it's recorded in Luke five was there was a miracle of an abundant catch of fish. And the Bible says that after this great miracle happened, the net broke. And later on, Jesus, of course, they left the fish there on the beach on the shore. And Jesus said, come and follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And the idea in the Greek is, come and follow me, and I'm going to transform you. I'm going to develop you into fishers of men. But this was a process where Jesus, for the next three and a half years, was preparing these guys to become apostles, really. So the first few months, ten months or so, they followed him and they watched him and they saw what he did. They saw him preach the kingdom, teach the people, perform miracles. And then Jesus spent the night in prayer. He came down from the mountain. He called twelve to be apostles, is what it says. Mark's account says that they might be with him and that he might send them out, is what it says, that he might send them out. He might apostolos them. Sometimes the greek word ekbalo is used to send out, which means to kick out, to force. And sometimes people, when the church isn't going out, God sometimes has to use circumstances and be forceful, like in the persecution in Stephen's day and so on. But when we talk about this mandate that every believer is to become a disciple who becomes a fissure of man. And I think that really is the game changer. If we don't recognise that, like you said, right now, nothing has changed with the mission and with the opportunity. The harvest is still there. We just can't have large gatherings in many places of the world. But nothing has changed. And we need to come back to this apostolic mandate. How do we balance? This is the question I'm leading up to. How do

we balance taking someone who maybe has just become a believer and maybe they have some character issues, they're struggling, there's still brokenness in their life. And so some pastors, like, I don't want to use those guys. It's like I say, sometimes, like, the grenade goes off and people get hit with the shrapnel from the grenade. So how do you take those type of people that maybe they're struggling? They're new believers. They have areas they need to grow in and help them without blowing the church up or so many people getting hurt by that.

Alain Caron 30:10

Well, you're talking to an ex cocaine dealer here. So how do we deal with people like that? Some basics never change. Some pastoral care, deliverance counselling is needed for sure, but I would say you need to put them into the action. The mistake we often do is to have them too long in the passive mode. You don't grow very well in a passive mode. We're not made to be passive. Everything in us, life is not passive. Life is a development. So integrate them as soon as possible in some action, even if you need to watch them closely because of the lack of maturity, the lack of wisdom and instil in the church, a culture of love and respect and vulnerability and authenticity, so that you do not have to be at the stage of perfection to open your mouth or to serve the Lord. This is a place for broken people that Jesus brings together and we can all grow together. So if we work in that culture of respect, love, authenticity, there is room for even new believers to start exercising whatever gift they have, because we know very well that a baby Christian can start hearing from God and even prophesying, even if he doesn't know the rules, because he has the spirit. And so I find ways to integrate them right away. Our model is house churches, home groups, small circles where you can function. And so we don't rely too much on the big mass gathering, although we love it. But we relay for the development on small groups and people together. We need to trust people. If you trust people, they will give it back to you. I remember one time we had a tent outreach outside and I wanted someone to watch. So I took the guy that was just out of prison, a young guy, he was about 17 years old. And I said, you will be the watchman for the night that changed his life. He said, do you know that I can make a few phone calls, all the sound system, everything will be gone and I'll make money, like, I know. And he said, you asked me to watch it. That changed his life. It's about 20 years past, I'm telling you, and he's still telling me that you don't know what you did that night. So we need to trust people and make disciples of them.

Glenn Bleakney 33:12

Yeah, that's great. Thank you. And when we talk about making disciples, really the great commission, particularly in Matthew 20 819, the commandment there in the greek language is to make disciples. And we do it by going, by baptising and by teaching them. That's what the original language is conveying. Let's talk about the apostle Paul's approach for church planting right now or making disciples. When we read the Book of Acts, we know we talk about his three missionary journeys, and I prefer the term

apostolic missions, but that terminology. But Paul and Barnabas initially were sent out from Antioch. They had been there. They had been ministering. That says there were teachers, the prophets and teachers in the church. The Holy Spirit speaks and says, separate Saul and Barnabas to the work I've called them to do. They laid hands on them, and then the Bible says, sent them out, and they were sent out by the Holy Spirit. They were apostolic or by the Holy Spirit. So Paul goes out with Barnabas. He begins preaching in these different places, and then what happens later on? And you allude to this when you talk about apostolic networks in your book. He appoints what they call overseers, or elders, depending on the term. But we see, though, that they didn't really stay a long time. But the apostles established the church, then they appointed elders. But conversely, we really don't see in the New Testament pastors starting churches, do we?

Alain Caron 35:03

No, we don't see them at all. I'll tell you my take on that. You see, the pattern is quite simple. If we follow the tracks of Paul, what do we have? The Holy Spirit chooses somebody. Then that somebody is sent on a mission. Then what we see very quickly is a team forming. At first, it was just Paul and Barnabas and Mark, and then what do we see? This theme is growing. Now. We follow Paul and his team. His theme becomes bigger and bigger. Everywhere he goes. He establishes communities of believers, let's call them like that, communities of believers. It's quite sure that the first churches we read in his first and second trips were probably churches of like, 1215 people, 20 people, maybe even eight people. There was very small churches, and he put someone in charge. That's all it means. Once an elder and an overseer, he said, listen, you look to me like you're the best to take care of those guys, so just stay in what I taught, and we'll keep in touch. So he established those small communities of believers, and he went along like that. And what we see is that those first churches, local churches, started to be established everywhere. But in some specific places, like Ephesus or Corinth, Paul stayed much longer, because in other places, he would stay just a few days or a few weeks. But in Ephesus, he stayed for two years, and in current, a year and a half, if I'm not mistaken. And in those places, he brought the church to another level. And that's what I call an apostolic centre. So what do we have in those cases? We have a residing apostle with an apostolic team residing, and they develop the church in number and in capacity to train, and these become centres, resource centres for all the little churches that are scattered everywhere. Because in the little churches that have been established, they might not have the luxury to have the fivefold gift right away. They are just a small number. It's a beginning of a church. And not all churches have the fivefold ministers in them, but a place like Ephesus can send out teams and resources that are lacking in other places. So the picture comes complete. Now we have a number of local or pastoral churches, and I would call them apostolic churches. Why? Because they are churches and they are aligned with an apostle and his team and in contact most probably with an apostolic centre. And so there is a network that has been developed and so apostolic centres in the main cities resourcing those apostolic churches. And we say they're apostolic because they are fed by the apostolic vision. Even if they are not

led by an apostle themselves, they are led by a pastor or an elder. And so that's the picture that we come to today. At least that's what I see. Many churches are realising that they need an apostolic alignment, because what happened after a few hundred years of that, Constantine came and smothered those churches and they lost vision and they became only pastoral, without a vision for the kingdom in many cases. So just Christians staying together, maintaining what they had, which we see up to today. But there is a desire to come back to a fuller vision of the kingdom and to be in alignment with an apostolic vision or an apostolic team or an apostolic centre. And so in other churches, the pastors discover that, after all, I'm not a true pastor, I'm more like an apostle, except we never used those terms. But in the fabric of who he is, he discovers I'm much more like an apostle, or another would say, I'm much more like a prophet, I'm much more like an evangelist. Churches are led by all kinds of ministries. We call them all pastors, which is not biblical, they're not pastors. We just. Traditionally we call everybody pastor, but now people discover who they really are. And by the way, it's true that in the New Testament we don't see pastors starting churches, apostles start churches. And the word bishop or overseer, elder and shepherd are interchangeable. You see that in Acts 20, when Paul says call the elders, when the elders came from Ephesus, he says, watch the flock that the Lord made you overseers over. Be good shepherd of them. So they are elders, bishops, pastors. That's really what a pastor is. So he's watching the flock. But the apostle has established the church.

Glenn Bleakney 40:46

Yeah, absolutely, completely concur. And that's very scriptural, the pattern there that you mentioned. So the whole concept here of being apostolic, this isn't about all of a sudden calling yourself an apostle and getting a new business card and pastors deleted and apostles now on the business card. This is shifting into an apostolic culture and the mission, the paradigm, which is first and foremost about advancing the kingdom on the earth.

Alain Caron 41:23

Yes.

Glenn Bleakney 41:25

When you go back to Isaiah 60, I love Isaiah 60. It says, arise, shine, your light has come. The glory of the Lord is risen upon you. Then verse two says, for, behold, darkness shall cover the earth and deep darkness the people. But the Lord will arise over you and his glory will be seen upon you. So we see this conflict. Satan wants the earth to be covered the earth with darkness and deep darkness the people. But the Lord says, I want my people to arise and shine. And in the book of Habakkuk, chapter two, I

believe it's verse 14, it says that the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. As the waters cover the seas, so God's desire is that the earth would be filled with the knowledge of his glory. Satan wants to cover the earth with darkness. And there's two kingdoms here in conflict. And I think that the church has to recognise that our calling as the ecclesia of God is to advance the kingdom first and foremost. It's not to come together in our holy huddle and just sing Kumbaya. Bless me, Lord. We come together. There's a purpose for that. The scripture is clear. We're not to forsake the assembling together of ourselves. The Bible talks about one anothering how we help one another to grow by using our gifts and so on. Iron, sharpening iron. But ultimately we come together in order to be encouraged, inspired, trained, equipped and sent out. We're called to be an apostolic people. And I think that's the huge difference when you have pastors, and as you said, the word pastor literally means shepherd. There's only one time in the New Testament we read the word pastor in Ephesians four, verse twelve. Right, as a noun. Every other time it's a verb meaning to shepherd. So we have apostles, we have fivefold ministry. We have elders, presbyteras, we have overseers, episcopas. And their goal is to equip the people as well. It's not just to say, well, I'm a pastor, and I want you to come here and be comfortable, and I'll minister to your needs. But there's a purpose for that. And the word equipping, this is something I believe is so important. The word equipping in Ephesians 4:12 can be translated, the word that is derived from the root word can be translated to mend fishing net. I believe it's in Matthew 4:21, where that word is used in cartridizo. So the idea there is, there's a mending, but the word can also be used for preparing. And it's also found in one corinthians one. I think it's verse nine or ten, where it talks about being joined together. I think that word equipping is very powerful, that we understand the calling of fivefold is to equip, which is to mend people, to blend people, is the way I put it, so that we become a body, so we're not just individuals doing our own thing, but we become a body. And then to send people, to release them, to launch them. And when we get this right, when we reset and make that our focus. Yeah, of course, people need encouragement. They need comfort, they need healing, deliverance, inner healing, whatever. But ultimately, we see the differences to release them, to send them out into their destiny, their purpose and their calling. So in a church that traditionally has been modelled after a weekend gathering, where I go to church for an hour or 90 minutes or whatever on a Sunday, and that church really has not been doing much the leadership to equip people. Clearly, you have a generation of consumers, spectators, that type of thing. But today it seems, in particular, millennials, they want authentic community. They want the real power of the Holy Spirit, and they want purpose, right? They want a purpose in life. Let's just talk a little bit about the church making that transition so that we become effective in engaging our culture and reaching those who in particular have no interest in the institutional church and the conventional church. What is the answer? Because many churches, many pastors are dealing with this. How do I grow? Like right now? Oh, my church people are scattered. What are we going to? So let's just give us your feedback, your insight into that. Elaine, please.

Alain Caron 46:54

I would not be too much concerned about growing, per se, if I can say that. Now, I know we all want to grow, but we put a lot of emphasis on church growth for many years. I would say let's concentrate on. Let's clarify what's the mandate of the church, what are we up to? What do we want to produce? Do we believe that the Lord wants to rule on the earth or not? Because some people believe they're just waiting to go to heaven. So if we believe that, there's not much incentive to bring an influence on the earth, so what are we believing? What is our role? Should we bring back the glory that was lost? Is this our mandate? When we read in revelations, revelation 11:15, is it where the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of God and of his Christ? How will this happen? Will this happen by magic? One day Jesus will just say, here I am, I take everything. Or do we have a part in going towards that? And of course we do. So we need to clarify for ourselves what are we up to? And in a church that wants to start walking along that, I believe the main leader, or the leaders together should clarify their own understanding of why are we here? If he wanted to bring us to heaven, it could be done a long time ago. So why does he stay? Keep us here on the earth? What's our purpose? And once we clarify that, is our structure helping us to go towards that goal? If we have a maintenance structure, it will not serve an expansion mandate. So for us, we dismantled an old structure because the structure needs to serve the vision, right? So our old structure was very traditional, a group of elders and a pastor. The pastor is the one ministering to the congregation. And the congregation, year after year, comes to be ministered to. This is not wrong in itself, but we want to go further. And so with teaching, with dialogue, we agreed, and it was hard for some to agree, but reaching agreement is still important. We agreed to dismantle the old structure and to replace it by an apostolic structure. What do I mean? I mean that I was the main leader. I still am. And I surrounded myself by a team, which I call an apostolic team, which is a team of different gifts and different capacities of people. And that team is flexible, it's not positions for life, it's a functional team if you want. It's like the people walking with Jesus when he travelled across Israel. It's the people walking or taking the ship with Paul when he travels. People of the journey, if you're ready to make the journey with me, if you're willing to leave whatever stops it and commit to join on the journey with me. That's what I call the apostolic journey. That journey is, how can we bring back God's glory in a world where it has been lost? And what steps do we need to do? And how can we have an entrance in the seven mountains of society to bring the influence of the gospel there? So if we will work together, if we will plan together, we will be able to advance. And so that's been my life for the last few years. I'll tell you, there's places with great encouragement. Taiwan, for example. I've been working with them for a while and with Chuck Pierce, and they have recently I was on Zoom again. They have established seven apostolic cities, and they are entering now in the medical world and in the education world, to transform from the inside with the kingdom values. And they bring such a resource to the government in secular society that this is an infiltration of the kingdom of God going inside of society. Why do they do that? They do that because they have the right vision of the mandate of the church. If your vision of the mandate is that we need to huddle together until Jesus comes back, then this is what you're going to do. You will follow your vision and you will reach what you aim right. If your vision is how can we transform society, how can we bring the kingdoms to Jesus? Because in revelation, when it says the kingdom become the kingdom of God, his plan is not to destroy the kingdoms of this world. His plan is to

take them and rule over them, because he is the king and we are to facilitate that with the giftings we have. So in a church, let's first see if you can have a clear vision of the mandate. You may need some help. You may need apostolic people to teach alongside you, to counsel you, to father you. If I can say, you may need to work close more closely with Glenn. Glenn didn't ask me to say that. You may need to connect with a man like him or someone else that the Lord puts in your path and have help to transition gradually, because you don't want to shock God's people. God's people are precious, and you want to help them transition in their minds, in their understanding of the gospel, of the gospel of the kingdom, not just the gospel of salvation it's included in. You want to help them transition, you don't want to lose them. And you want to bring the right structure that will facilitate the development of everybody, the training, and so that you will not have just a congregation of converts, but a congregation of disciples. And once they realise that they are disciples, they will come to you with projects, they will come to you with visions and things they want to do. While in the past you were trying to motivate them to sign up for a chore in the church, they will knock at your door and say, can I do this? Can I venture there? Because vision will be released inside the body. That's what we have been experiencing in our apostolic centre. I could tell you stories and stories that we have done in nations, up to building a 13 kilometre road in the mountains of Haiti to connect the population to the road system and to running water and to electricity and to medical care. Because an apostolic church does not only do Sunday morning meetings, it also builds roads in the mountains and builds stuff and motivates people and is a nightmare for the devil. I'll tell you, I love you.

Glenn Bleakney 54:41

In your book, you talk about Pax Romana and the whole idea of the roman kingdom. The Romans. And the word apostle, of course, was a secular term before it was used in the New Testament. And you refer to the whole mission of the roman empire in invading, occupying and transforming and apocalypse were the ones that were sent out by Caesar to go into a land and know, ultimately transform that. So just elaborate on that, the whole concept.

Alain Caron 55:23

I know our time is running short, but this is important. Thank you for bringing it, Glenn. There's two words that are not religious at all that Jesus will use. He will use ecclesia, which we derive. Church. That's a mystery. Church has nothing to do with ecclesia as a term, but I will build my church. The word is ecclesia, and he chose apostles. And none of those two words are religious. Ecclesia was a civil gathering of citizens with authority to make decrees for their city. That's what we are when we gather. You see, when Jesus said, I will build my ecclesia, I will build that structure that has authority to make decrees on the earth. And apostles were those, like you said, sent by the emperor to take new territory. And that conquest would be done in three stages. Invade, occupy and transform. Why transform? Because if you transform it, it will never come back to what it

was, so you invade it. We understand that Christians sometimes are poor. At the second step, we need to occupy what you have invaded. Every inch you win. Every inch you need to keep, you need to occupy if you don't want to lose it, if you don't want to lose it, transform it with the atmosphere of heaven. So they would occupy the land and one would transform the road system, the hygiene rules, they will build baths, running water, they change the laws, they change what we call the culture of the lands they had conquered. And so those cultures became Romanized, from barbarian to Romanized, so they would never come back to what was. And so that's our mission. Jesus came from heaven, our great apostle, to come and invade. He launched a conquest operation on the earth. Invade the earth. Built a team around him, sent us as he was sent. As my father sent me. I send you as my father, Apostolo. He made of me an apostle. I make of all of you apostles. Not maybe individual apostles, but we have an apostolic nature as a church. So you go invade, occupy what you gain, and transform it. Transform it from sin to righteousness, transform it from darkness to light. Transform it from the kingdom of the devil to the kingdom of God. So then when Jesus comes, he rules on all those kingdoms. And I'm not saying that we have to have done all that before he comes, but we need to work towards that until he comes. Amen. So we invade, occupy, and transform. And that's the whole notion of my last book, the territorial gains. You see, we need to gain new territories for expansion. We cannot just stay in our little corner and be happy with our building. We need to think city, we need to think nations. We need to take governments, we need to take schools and so forth, so that the kingdom comes everywhere. We need reformers in education. We need godly politicians. We need all that. We need scientists, so we don't need only Bible schools. We need professional schools of the kingdom. We need to train lawyers, need to train scientists. We need to train people of the kingdom that will live and impact this world. That's the apostolic mandate. So, from the local church, we cannot do all of that in one church, but we can do a part of it. Every church can and have an impact.