

Planting with a Missional Mindset & Strategy- Kris Beckert

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Hey everybody, my name is Kris Beckert and I'm going to be leading this session on planting with a missional mindset and strategy. I thought it'd be important just to share a little bit about myself as we get started. I come from a church planting background, meaning that my first ministry experience actually was being a part of a team that was planting a new church. I had been working as an environmental scientist, that was kind of my background and schooling and all that kind of stuff, and God had other plans in that, and my first experience was.

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being a part of that team, trying to get things up and going and started, and of course this was in the late 2000s, about 2007-2008 time frame, which was a lot different in our culture and just what's going on, and even in church planting. And we had the kind of like launch, large message. in that. Since then, I've experienced a lot of different forms of church, both established churches, being on staff at a large church, as well as being a planter myself. I planted a church.

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actually in the building of a dying church, and that was a very, very interesting experience that I'll relate to in our time together. But I've also planted some more non-traditional forms of church, or if you want to say non-worship-centric forms of church, kind of fresh expressions of church, including a hiking ministry that the goal was to form church out on the trails and dinner church, gathering with friends, neighbors, people in a common kind of third place. We'll talk about.

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what that means, but together for over a meal around tables. So that's a little bit of my background about who I am currently serving a congregation. called Table Life Church. It's at the Church of Nazarene. I'm Martha Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and it's great to be with you. So let's dive in a little bit. First, I want to start off with just talking about what a missionary church actually is, because we can tend to use the word mission and being missional in lots of different ways.

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You've probably read lots and lots of books on the subject, but really talking about our calling to be a missionary church. And basically, a missionary church is a church, the ecclesia, the called-out ones, the gathering, that operates as if it were a mission team living and ministering in a foreign country or a foreign land. So just as we send missionaries to different places to share the good news of Jesus,

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we're actually living and acting in the same way, but doing so in our own backyard. So a missionary church is... is one that engages people who are part of its team. It's grouping to live like undercover missionaries, basically undercover missionaries, as my friend J.R. Briggs says, disguised like students, teachers, nurses, doctors, lawyers, construction workers, moms, dads, etc. And when we begin to see ourselves like that, it really opens your eyes to the potential, to the ability to connect with people where they are in our own background.

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And I like to say it's being a missionary, but getting to sleep in your own bed. You see yourself like that. You act like that, that wherever you go, whether it's the grocery store or whether it's in the midst of your church community, that we take that missionary posture. And basically, it's this idea that if every Christian is a missionary, then every church should be a missionary training center. And that we look at. Our churches at our communities as.

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missionary sending bodies that we're going to be gathering, but then sending out. So let me talk a little bit about how mission engagement works and through how that's connected to different strategies for that. If we're engaging with those in our communities that we're connecting with to share the good news of Jesus, embodying that as well as spoken that. We do that through several strategies. And to tell you the truth, this has changed a lot really in the last couple years.

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Having been on a church plant team 2008, 2016, 2017, that was when I planted. Here we are 2022, getting into 2023 very shortly. And things have changed a lot. COVID, of course, has sped up, people say, secularization here in the States. Europe and Canada are a little bit of quite a bit ahead of us in, that. But you can also see how these different missionary postures or these missional strategies,

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how they're, as far as like, how well are they effective? How well do they connect with people? That has changed over time. And I'm going to share four of them with you. And you can follow along in your notes. The first is an attractional approach, attractional strategy. And that's what has been really for the 20th century church, a very meaningful and powerful way of connecting with people in the community. And even church planting. During the church growth era,

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the Willow Creek, you know, that's where the launch method launched large. We're here, come to us, you're invited. And we continue to have elements of that today. And this is not saying that that is wrong. Even my church, we have things like, like outreach events on our lawn, to say, Hey, guys, we're here, you know, we want to meet you connect with our neighbors and come to Sunday worship.

And, And so that's kind of like an attractional approach. Think attraction, bringing others to you. But the second approach is an engaging approach.

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And this says, come with us, you are invited. So we go there. We go, and the there can be many different places in our community, neighborhoods. If you're in a rural setting, kind of what that hub of that community is. On other people's turf, in different events and things that are going on actively. And that's an engaging approach. And you may serve together at a different community event. But the idea is to say, hey, we want to connect with you here, but come back with us. Come back with us, you are invited.

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The third idea, the third kind of missional strategy is an incarnational approach. An incarnational approach. And this really takes that missionary posture to heart. Let's go there and start something where you are. So learning the people, the culture, the people. The problems, the joys. So, I'm going to start with a little bit of a story about how I came to be a member of that community, or that group of people, starting something where you are. And the former church, Dinner Church, that actually my church is in the process of launching.

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and starting here, kind of embodies that, that incarnational approach. That instead of saying, come here, we're choosing a very neutral place at the community center, right here in our borough or township, that's what we do in Pennsylvania. But it's starting something where people are, where they're already gathered, where people live, and really embodying and asking that question, what does it mean to embody the gospel here? The fourth strategy would be something called gathering and sending.

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And this is also very common to more traditional forms of church, established forms of church, that we huddle in and then we send out. We huddle in and then we send out. Meaning that our gathering is kind of that energizing moment of recharging our batteries, so that when we go to church. we go to work, we can see ourselves as missionaries so that we can pay attention to our neighbors, you know, kind of more in an individual setting, that gathering and scattering missional strategy. So just for a minute here, unpacking all that, that was a lot. I want you to begin.

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to picture what some of these could look like. So I'm going to play a little bit of a game just for a minute here called, is it missional? Is it missional? And I'm going to describe to you a situation and I want you to identify which of those four missional strategies there it is. And I'm not going to give you the answers. We can talk about that when we meet together live in October. But the first one is you decide together with your team to hold a community cookout at whether on site means your house or at the gathering place that you're hoping to.

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begin worship. That you're holding community cookout, you're inviting everybody to be there and, to come and whether that's at your house if you're more of a kind of house church gathering model or a church location um okay so that's the first situation second is additional having a booth at the apple festival here in my town we have this big apple festival they've held for years and years and that's where everybody in your grandmother's church goes and sets up a booth so um you're.

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hosting a booth at the apple festival um okay the third one number three joining a running club, you yourself you're a runner maybe you're a cyclist so we can change it to according to that maybe you're a walker i don't know but um you're joining that that club and that gathering, um okay the fourth example a weekday small group gathering um that you gather together with some friends some neighbors you pray as a part of that and you, then after one nine o'clock you leave um so what would that be i want.

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for each of those four, and you can rewind this if you need to, identify which of those missional engagement strategies that you see in that context. So it's good for us to just think about that, to process that as we go along. I want to now go to scripture because I think it's important that we have that grounding in the word of God and really see how a lot of what we're doing now and what you guys are doing as church planters, it hasn't changed. But I think we can.

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learn a lot. We can learn a lot from, especially from the Apostle Paul and how he engaged people in Athens. And this is found in Acts chapter 17. If you have a Bible, you can get it out. I'm going to read through this passage, this story together, and you can always go back and look at some of the specifics there. But I want to look at Paul's missional engagement. And then we're going to kind of walk through some of those pieces of that and what we can, learn from that together. And it's important to note that at this time, when Paul is going to.

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Athens, what's taking place is a scattering of the church, if you will, that the stoning of Stephen was actually a turning point in the life of the church community. Because a lot of believers were became very fearful of what was going to happen to them. And so there began this dispersal, not on a grandiose scale, but to an extent, dispersal of people leaving Jerusalem and scattering to different areas. And so at the same time, people were also settling in different.

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places around that known world, that the good news is being spread. And so Paul takes this missionary journey, thinking once again of himself as that missionary, to Athens to begin to connect with people in the pack. And I want you to pay attention to the strategy that he uses. Like I said, we'll go back and unpack some of the pieces of this. So scripture says, Acts 17, while Paul was waiting for

them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. You may underline that, idols.

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We're going to talk about that. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, what is this babbler trying to say? Anybody said that about you? Others remarked, he seems to be advocating foreign gods. They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. Then they took him and brought him to a meeting in the Areopagus, where they said to him,

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may we know what this new teaching is that you're presenting? You're bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean. And all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to lay's ideas. Kind of smart. Then Paul stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said, Men of Athens, I see that in every way you are religious. Wow, what a compliment. So, for as I walked around and I looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with the inscription to an unknown God.

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Now, what you worship as something unknown, I'm going to proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and the earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands as if he needed anything because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. And one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth and he determined the time set for them in the exact places where they should live. And God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him,

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though he's not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being. He's quoting one of their philosophers. As some of your own poets have said, right? We are his offspring. Therefore, since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image made by man's design and skill. In the past, God overlooked such ignorance. But now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day where he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to men by reaching him from the dead.

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Then, when they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered. But others said, We want to hear you again on this subject, Paul. At that, Paul left the council. A few men became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysus, a member of the Areopagus, and also a woman

named Damaris, and a number of others. Okay, so that's Acts 17, 16, 34. You can go back and check that out. But the first thing I think we can learn from Paul's engagement with the Athenians.

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and as far as our mission, our missionary approach and engagement. is it begins with the God who sends. It doesn't begin with us. It doesn't begin with our motivations of starting planting a church. It begins with the God who sends, the sending God. It's not the church of God that has a mission in the world. It's the God of mission who has a church in the world. The church is the means that God uses to embody his mission. And this goes back to really our understanding of Christology and the gospel, the person, and the work of Jesus,

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which connects to our missiology, which is the purpose of God and what he has for his people. And then that's formed in the ecclesiology, which is the form and functions of the church. So the person and the work of Jesus comes first. That enacts the purpose of God into his people. And then that's embodied. And that's fleshed out in the form and the functions of his church. And it's noted it's rooted in the character and the heart of God. We see that at the very beginning of this passage that we just read.

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That it's very important that as you're getting ready to or as you're engaging with people around you with that missional posture, we need to access God's heart. It begins with a compassion. It begins with that your heart is broken for a community or for what you see around you and the needs and either people suffering in a way or struggling. And so my question to you, and then you might write this down in your notes, is who or what in your community breaks your heart?

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Who or what in your community breaks your heart? And start there. Because that means that God, it's starting with God and it's stirring. He's stirring up. Something inside of you is that starting point. And that's what follows that divine priority. That we need to be reminded that God is the one who sends. God is the one. We are sent into the places that we find ourselves. We see ourselves as being sent. But it's God who is the sender, not our governing body or even yourself or your great ideas.

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And that's really like a humbling approach, too. And this goes back to really who God is, right, as God's very being. As the Father sent the Son and the Father and Son sends the Spirit, so the Father, Son, and Spirit send the church. That we see ourselves as sent. So that's the first thing I think that we can learn from how Paul acted in his approach. But the second piece is it's about sending more than gathering.

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And I think this has even more so changed in the last couple of years and really the last decades where the church was known as just this Sunday-centric gathering. But even more so as church planters. That gathering for worship is important, but it's not central to who we are. And just think about that. That it's about seeking those who don't know Jesus. Call folks that are in your community that don't know Jesus pre-Christian.

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They have the potential of being Christian. Some people will say, oh, well, they're lost. Some people find that offensive. But you see it in the Bible, Jesus uses that term a lot. But it's about seeking those who don't know Christ more so than gathering the saved. More so than gathering the saved. And that's where a lot of times churches got off track because it becomes about us. You know, it's just like when you find that group of people that you love and connect with. I've had this issue with some small groups going on.

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You find that you love it. And you stay there. And then you don't see a need for anybody else. Again and again, we have to be reminded that the posture is more about sending than gathering. It's the God who sends, God who sends, but that our priorities lie in sending more than gathering. And part of that, too, is what we see that Paul does in verse 17, that he's present and conspicuous in the community. He's out there. He's in the marketplace. He goes to the marketplace, the synagogues.

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He goes to Areopagus. He's out there doing things. And instead of huddling in our church buildings or even whether it's your house or our Bible studies and gatherings, that we're equipping our team members, we're equipping people to be missionaries in public spaces. And that cool thing is that's going to look different according to who is around you. It's going to look a lot different as far as how you're wired and what kinds of things come naturally, what kind of people do you engage with.

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In sociology, there's... This understanding of what's called... first, second, and third places or spaces that we as human beings, we kind of have these three different spaces that we tend to spend our time in. The first being home, the second being work or school, and the third being that other space, places like restaurants, right? Think back to the old, oh, and I hate to say this, but this old show called Cheers, the place where everybody knows your name was at the bar. Lots of people find life there and find community there. Maybe for.

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you, it's the coffee shop. And one, one group of people that I was working with in a more rural setting, it happened to be somebody's pasture that people would go and they would kind of have some bonfires and things out there. But that third

space, that third place. And so a good question to ask is where are those third places in your community? Where are those third places that you can be like Paul and intentionally inhabit? maybe you yourself as a church planter, but also your team, where can you intentionally go? And a.

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good exercise to do for this is what I call people math exercise. So, so kind of put at the center of a piece of paper, you, where you live, your kind of center, community center, maybe where you, maybe you're gathering already, or you have your team that is, is meeting. And, and I want you to draw around that, the people in the places that you find. So for example, maybe you live in a.

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neighborhood, and maybe two blocks down, you have a neighbor that you know, because your kids play with the same soccer team. Or maybe you're in a city or an urban place, and there's a, there's a coffee shop that's on the corner, just kind of sketch out a geography of your community. And then begin putting little arrows and dots and labels for where you already know people, where you know. Some people gather where maybe is a festival grounds or someplace that there seems to be a lot of activity. Maybe there's a school that's nearby.

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So sketch that out. And it's kind of a good exercise to look at, like, who in your immediate vicinity, where are the very natural places for you to connect? And you might do that with some of your team members as well, that they live in some different places other than you. They might do that same activity and that same practice. Just to begin, where can I be conspicuously present in my community? Hans Kung once said, a church which pitches its tents without constantly looking out for new horizons, which does not continually spread camp, is being untrue to its calling.

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Once again, we go back to that non-Sunday morning centric idea that we're forming church where people... ..are instead of... of the build it and I will come mentality, we see ourselves as sent. So let's move on from here. So the third piece here that I think Paul's story embodies and reveals to us is that this approach, this missional engagement approach practices grace and establishes commonality. We practice grace and establish commonality. And that's really the real meaning of what it means to be.

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incarnational, that we affirm what we can, we challenge what we must, but we understand first. And in every community, and especially in a very divisive age that we live in, there's a they, there's a those people. And we as followers of Christ, when we enter into a setting, we come with understanding that the they are not the enemy. They are not the enemy. And part of that is when we, in order to practice grace and establish commonality, we have to be incarnational. Grace and establish relationships and that commonality, we have to.

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to do listening. We have to do a lot of listening. That listening posture that we approach. And here's another good exercise for you. I'm going to give you a couple of these things to do along with this and practices and then we'll talk about it when we meet. Is to find somebody in your community, maybe you already have a relationship, maybe it's with the barista or somebody your kids play soccer with or neighbor or whatever. And see if you can meet with them for like 30 minutes, buy them coffee, go out to lunch, do something, sit on the porch, I don't know what it is. But.

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somebody who's not a part of your team and doesn't go to church and isn't a part of a church, whether they're irreligious, atheist, spiritual, whatever it is. And sit with them for that time and ask them to tell their story. Tell their story. What's your story? You know, what are the things that are most important to you? Maybe you might come up with a story that you want to tell with some questions. Just to ask, but only your only part is to ask questions, questions, clarification, questions, just to allow that conversation to continue, that your job is not to interject your story, to practice a posture of listening and listen and listen and see what God might be revealing through that.

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And that's where that establishing that commonality instead of I agree with you, I don't agree with you. Here's another idea. Here's some advice on how to handle this situation. We approach with the posture of this, of listening first. And I think that's really important. And also this practice of practicing that grace, establishing some kind of commonality, it breaks down that sacred secular divide as well. Because we begin to see God. We begin to see God acting before we act. Because if we truly believe God is God, then we know that God was before.

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We see that again and again in the book of Acts, that God is already working before some of the disciples, before the apostles actually go there. And so it's for us to be attentive to what is God already doing in this community? What is God already doing in this person's life? That we don't actually bring Christ to anyone because he's already at work there. We're joining him and partnering with him in that process. And that's the point that when that relationship begins to develop is that we begin to relate that story, their story, to God's story and make those connections.

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But it first has to develop with that, that level of trust and that idea of listening. To love and to serve people where they are without necessarily an agenda to get them to come to a certain place or come to a certain point. Tim Keller, who's a famous church planter, pastor. He said a lack of cultural awareness leads to distorted Christian living and ministry. to be culturally aware of our setting and that this idea of reconciliation, we see that Paul.

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communicates in verses 27 to 29, reconciliation is the goal. And one thing to point out, I had you underline or kind of start the word idols in the first part of the scripture. It's important for us to identify the idols of the culture and the place that we find ourselves. This is also a good practice to do is identify the things that people worship in your locale. And they're going to be very different according to where you are. For example, I have some good friends.

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that live in Colorado. And we were in a discussion a while back, just actually about this very topic and their idol that they encounter is the outdoors, is that there's Colorado is beautiful ever been there, maybe you're there right now. I'm jealous of you. But there's many, many idols that people worship in your locale. And they're going to be very different mountains, there's lots of hiking, there's skiing. there's so many different outdoor there's kayaking there's like everybody's doing outdoor stuff everybody has racks on their roofs and trunks and the idol is the outdoors whereas a friend in New.

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York City for New York City it's entertainment it's how many things and shows and places that I that people can go to um Philadelphia that's where I grew up or where I'm from it's family family becomes the idol everything goes by the wayside if there's something going on with family and it's important for us to identify what are those idols it may not be the statue like in the Areopagus or may not be the the temple to the unknown god but there is an idol.

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that's in your community and it's good to listen for it it's good to listen for it and to imagine inviting people into a better story okay so moving on to the the fourth part here of this new year's eve I'm going to talk about the new year's eve and I'm going to talk about the new year's eve mission engagement strategy, of Paul is, is that it looks for people of peace. And this is a theme throughout scripture. We see this here in the, in the part, a very end of our story here, that Paul leaves the council, a few men become followers of Paul and believed, and one of them was Dionysus, who's a member of.

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the Areopagus. Think about that inroads, a member of this, this group of people that is, is very thoughtful, very powerful. And then this woman named Damaris. And for some reason, Luke, when he's, when he's writing this is indicating these specific people, perhaps because people knew them, perhaps because they started churches themselves. And this idea of people of peace goes also back to Luke's gospel in Luke 10, where the, where Jesus is talking about being, his disciples being.

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sent. And telling them to look for where you are welcomed, looked for where there is. in inroads look for where people treat you well um and so let me identify

you identify for you what a person of peace is it's someone who god will use to advance his mission because they are open to you someone that god's going to use to advance his mission because they're open to you and and god may be at work in their life let me just say this they may be a follower of christ and they may not but god's at work there and they're open they're open um they may not be.

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following jesus at the moment they may be open to it they may be totally not there's been situations let me tell you some church planters that have met people that have been total people that are not interested but guess what they like you they they would say smell the aroma of christ even without identifying who he is and and so it's looking for those people that have networks that have relationships maybe even have spaces, or that.

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kind of thing. I know in our situation, we're starting this dinner church. Lo and behold, we are meeting in this public place, this community building, and the borough, which is the government here, we gave them like a proposal to like rent the space. They like loved it so much they gave it to us for free. Like that doesn't happen, right? And so we've met with some of the borough council people and even some of the office staff, and they've been our people of peace, just totally. This one lady, she said she had like approved that with like, you know,

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flying colors because she believed in what we were doing trying to bring people together for this meal. And so, so it's very cool to see when those things come together about who is your person of peace, who are your people of peace. Someone who likes you and believes in what you're doing or what you're about, and they're willing to, to vouch for you. They're willing to tap into their networks or make things available to you. And they open doors. They open doors for you. And then the last piece here that I can't iterate enough is that this missionary posture that we take encourages a localized expression of the gospel.

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It's a local expression of the gospel. And the thing is, we as human beings, we approach church, we approach even church planting. I know I do this with my own ideas and expressions that I'm comfortable with and what I think church should be or what it should look like. But we have to be really cautious about how we import our cultural expressions, just as you would if you moved to the Philippines, you know, that you'd say, OK, we have a very Western view of things here in the States.

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But that might not be appropriate to the people in the Philippines that you would go. And start your missionary experience there. We'd be really cautious of that because we do it without even knowing. it. Our preferences, our backgrounds, and that kind of thing. It's important that we become students of our context, and we approach it with that posture rather than thinking that we're the teacher. And

let me even just say a word to you, and maybe you've moved recently, or you're going to move, and you're going to move to a different setting, a different state, even just like across.

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town, right? A different place, maybe you've served on staff or been a part of a church before. Um, it's really, really important that we don't try to replicate what we did before. And I will be the first to say this, because I was in Virginia at this large, serving on staff at this large church, um, after I had planted, and I was doing all these kind of creative ministries and, and ways of connecting with people, taking a missionary posture. When I moved here, my first instinct was to replicate what had been successful there. It didn't work.

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It wasn't effective. Interactive. I had to, once again, relearn that student posture rather than trying to say, okay, I know what to do, therefore I'm just going to replicate what I did before. That it's a localized expression of the gospel. And that's why it's important to employ local leadership. We see that in verse 34. We see that Paul's intention here is not to start a church necessarily out of these people and everybody's dependent on him, but to connect with people and then give them the tools in order to start. And that's why, even if you're coming into this with, say, a team of people, into a community, it's very important from the get-go that you begin to have some indigenous buy-in.

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And indigenous buy-in is meaning that people that you're connecting with that you then invite into leadership, even if, even if, say, that they're a little bit further behind in their discipleship than you would want or desire or maybe even be comfortable with. But to invite them along with you because that ultimately will, We'll create that more localized expression of church. And in that, we celebrate diversity. We celebrate the diversity. What is the diversity of your setting? That everybody doesn't look the same, think the same, act the same, come from the same background.

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And that's where also it's important to seek authentic expressions of church and hold our traditions lightly. Maybe you come from a certain tradition that you celebrate things in a certain way. But it's asking the question, how would I adapt that in this cultural setting? And being creative, right, guys? Be creative. The creativity of the spirit, the playfulness of God. What could church look like here?

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And maybe it's different than what you first imagined that you would be planting. It doesn't mean that you don't come into it. Let me say this. It doesn't mean you come into it without a plan and you just kind of go willy-nilly and say, oh, everything's just going to... It doesn't mean you're organic. Like, that's... doesn't work either. But instead of having a preformed idea of what this gathering or what

this community should look like, it's asking the question, what could church look like here? And I want to end with this quote from David Bosch, where he says,

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the Christian faith is intrinsically incarnational. Therefore, unless the church chooses to remain a foreign entity, it will always enter into the context in which it happens to find itself. That it's important that we take that missionary approach, we take that missionary posture, engaging people where they are without our agendas, becoming the students rather than the teachers, looking for where God is already at work and active, where the spirit might be.

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already doing things with whom we can partner and forming church. So that's what I got for you guys. So thank you so much for the opportunity to speak into this. I hope this was helpful. I hope your wheels are turning up here. I really look forward to meeting with you in a couple weeks in October online. And please write down any questions that you have, any of the things that you're fleshing out, or even some of the roadblocks that you've been coming up against too.

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That way we can talk more about that. So God bless you guys. Have an awesome week, and I hope to see you soon.