



New Wine Cymru Leaders Conference – Paul Williams: ‘The Church on mission in Wales’

Speaker – Paul Williams [00:01:35] I've been asked to talk about the Church and mission in Wales. It's great to be in Wales. My great grandparents, John and Blodwyn, they were converted in the Welsh, the 1904, revival on the steps of their terraced house in Mountain Ash. And I'm incredibly grateful for the blessing that's come down all of the generations to me and my brothers and my uncles and my grandfather, and on it goes, from that. And you know what we're talking about, what Julian has already said so eloquently, I've got nothing left to add in a way to what Julian said – it's not only significant in this generation, but for generations to come. And, you know, we cannot have another missed generation. Because I feel such a burden for the missed generation of undisciplined Christians who are incredibly ignorant of the Bible, and many of them do not experience that Father's embrace that Julian talked about. And they are not encountering it through the Scripture, and they're wandering around in a culture that is also lost. And we cannot have another lost generation of disciples. So as you can tell, I'm carrying a passion and a conviction for what we're here to talk about.

[00:03:10] It's going to be a bit different to Julian's session. I, I've got the, the Pentecostal Charismatic formation. Sometimes it breaks out. But I've spent most of my career as a strategist in big cities and global organisations thinking about strategy. And now I'm with Bible society and God has put something on my heart about mission that I want to share with you. Fundamentally, I'm going to talk from my experience, my experience as a Christian in the workplace, in church leadership – I dabble – and as an academic theologian. I've been full time and still am on the faculty at Regent College in Vancouver, if that means anything to you.

[00:04:02] So I'm going to consider five main questions in the next 30 to 40 minutes. What does it feel like when we're entering into this topic of church and mission and we get past the excitement of gathering? What does it feel like? What emotions do we have around this topic? Where are we actually? What is our context for church and mission in Wales and how did we get here? What's pertinent from the journey of the past to help us move on from this present? What time is it? What is significant for our generation at this moment in history? And then finally, what now? How do we respond to this? So let's crack in.

[00:05:04] What does it feel like? What does it feel like to be a church leader in Wales? I've asked many church leaders, what does it feel like to be a church leader in contemporary society in different parts of the world, and especially around Western countries and Britain? But I've never actually asked the question in Wales before. And to help me, it so happens that we've got some research that Bible Society did with IDO last year surveying 60 church leaders across Wales. Less than half of them felt that their churches were effective in discipleship and mission. I don't know if that's a surprise to you. And the main barriers to that changing, they said, was a lack of people. There's not many of us. Pastors feeling overwhelmed. An apathy among the congregation. Now, this research covers a wide range of denominations in Wales, but it's quite influenced, numbers wise, by the larger older denominations, Catholic and Anglican. So of course it may be that the mix of denominations in this room and it's wonderful that there is a mix, and there's a unity in that, but it may be that we're a bit more upbeat than this. But given what I hear from pastors, from many different denominations over and over again elsewhere, I suspect that those upbeat feelings that we may have also go alongside a big dose of feeling overwhelmed, busy, tired. Is that is that fair? Are you with me? I see hands. Yes. Right. Now. So I think that there's, in some, we've had an awful lot of pastors statistically

quitting – during COVID. So this is the thing, this level of burnout. And, you know, and what that, what that speaks to.

[00:07:17] So how does it feel? But what about members of the congregation? How does it feel to be a Christian in contemporary society? Now, this is a question that I have been asking of lots of groups for over a decade and capturing the answers and turning them into a word cloud. Here it is. This is largely millennials and Gen Z. Zoomers if you want. Most Christians out there in the world, the people in your congregation, in their workplaces and neighbourhoods, they've got a positive approach, but they actually feel very isolated in wider society. Often it can seem like I'm the only one in my workplace, right? Now, that may not be true. But it's how they feel and it's often not true. And we need those Elijah moments – there's 700 prophets that I've kept safe. But, you know, those Elijah moments are needed because so many people feel isolated. They feel very challenged, alienated, sometimes embarrassed and awkward. Maybe not about Jesus, but perhaps about church.

[00:08:34] So we've got pastors in this state of some degree of being overwhelmed with the sense of the task that's upon us. We've got this sense of Christians finding it really challenging. I'm alone, I'm isolated, and I feel the alienation and that embarrassment of not fitting in somehow.

[00:08:55] What does it feel like, though, to be a non-churchgoer? Like the rest of society. Well, you are probably aware of the census results that came out very recently because the average person in Wales no longer identifies themselves as a Christian and certainly doesn't attend church. A large and growing minority say they have no religion. Now, these headline numbers can be easily distorted because the question about religion on the census is not mandatory, like many of them, it's voluntary. And yet most people chose to answer it. So a religious identity is no longer in our society. Things have changed. Julian made that point. It's no longer a default, right? Nobody's ticking Christian because they were born in Britain. There's something about the identity of Christian which is more meaningful to people than it was. And it would certainly be wrong to assume that everyone who ticks no religion is atheist. But nonetheless, these are the headlines, aren't they? And this is the mood. It's not just the headlines, but it's the mood of the society that Christianity is in decline. That's the mood. Less people feel that they can identify with the church.

[00:10:36] OK, what does all this mean? I said this was going to feel a bit different. When we look at this, we look at the reality of these things, what does it all mean? How do we make sense of it? Church leaders feeling overwhelmed, Christians feeling isolated and alienated, and the headlines, at least, telling us about Christianity in decline. Now, in a way, I don't need to say what I want to say now, but, because I think you've heard it so much already in the first couple of hours of our gathering. But this is not your problem. This is not my problem. It's not our burden to carry, changing these things. Changing all of those stuff, that stuff, it's not our mission to fix that. It's God's mission, right? It's God's mission. It's his zeal and his Spirit that's going to accomplish it as we attend to him and respond to him. But because he does want us to participate in what he's doing. And my sense, at this time, is that God is mobilising. And he's telling us to get ready. He's getting, he wants his people to get prepared for what's coming, for what he wants to do, and he wants to do it with us. He is going to do it anyway, but he wants us involved so he's saying get ready because look at what I'll do. There's a new thing. Do you see it?

[00:12:14] Okay, let's start paying attention. And we're going to do that first by thinking about our context. Where are we? The biblical answer to this question is exile. We're in exile. That's how the Bible frames our context. Now, there are good things and bad things about exile, and there are good and bad ways of thinking about exile and being in it. So it's really important that we understand how the Bible frames this word exile as a descriptor. How does the Bible shed light on that? Here's a dictionary definition of the word: 'to be separated from one's place of belonging'. And what goes with it is this sense of cultural dissonance. That's what creates so much of the energy drag that we feel day-to-day. The, it's the experience of refugees, migrants and exiles. This sense of discord, confusion, conflict between the culture that we really come from and the culture we're in. And it creates this dissonance. And it's tiring to be in that environment because we all want to belong. We want to fit in. And so it's creating this kind of drag under the surface all

the time. But how does Scripture speak into that? We don't like the description because we think it sounds like judgement on us. Or maybe it feels a bit too world rejecting. But both Old and New Testaments use this framing, this theology – very important word exile – to turn around into something very hopeful and missional. Just like the way that, you know, it's one of these paradoxes of the kingdom.

[00:14:23] So let's have a look at a few examples of what I mean. The Jews from the southern kingdom were sent into exile in Babylon in a series of waves of deportation. It wasn't one. Over and over they went around 600 BC, and those remaining in the land were ruled over by kind of Babylonian overlords. And Psalm 37, which you may know quite well, gives us a sense of how they felt. They're down by the river, they're refusing to play their harps, bemoaning their fate, wishing that God would smash the Babylonian babies against the rocks. Maybe something they'd seen the Babylonian soldiers doing in their community. And they were very receptive to the false prophets, like Hananiah, telling them what they wanted to hear – God's going to destroy the Babylonians. You're going to be back in Jerusalem within two years. Everything's going to be fixed. They are angry. They're huddled together in a ghetto of resistance against all things Babylonian. We also know that some of the exiles – we know from Ezra and Nehemiah – there's a whole bunch of them who gave up on their Jewish identity. They compromised, they intermarried, and they began oppressing one another. They forgot about the justice and mercy of the law, and they were assimilating to the practices of the pagans.

[00:15:52] And these are the two primary temptations of exile, right: that we withdraw into a ghetto of anger and resistance against this degenerate culture, or we assimilate. Because it's much more comfortable to belong and to fit in. And as Christians, we face these temptations today. Our culture has been dominated since the sixties, hasn't it, by postmodernity, a reaction to the previous era of modernity with its great hope in human reason to solve all of the world's problems: science, technology, the economy and so forth, and bring about human progress. That didn't work. And postmodernity has been busy for a good 50 years, deconstructing all of that. But in deconstructing it all, it's also been deconstructing Christianity because Christianity wedded itself too much to that previous era. So, friends, we cannot make the same mistake again, right, of wedding ourselves to a cultural ideology that will die. And we'll be left widowed. And there's an extent to which that's happened to the church. And it means that for some of us, we're going to be feeling a kind of nostalgia for an imagined Christian past or resentment at the constant attacks on Christianity that we've experienced. And we get frustrated with the apparent irrelevance of the church to contemporary life. And even if you don't feel that many of your congregants do feel those things. Why can't the church connect to the issues of society that I'm hearing about constantly on the media – climate change, inequality, injustice? And these feelings can tempt us, can't they? They can tempt us to withdraw into our holy huddle, to resist, to fight back or to assimilate, to syncretise, tone down those awkward bits of the Bible and the gospel that make Jesus less palatable.

[00:18:11] There's a few other ways that we deal with this. There's a sort of nifty bit of eschatological footwork. That's a long word. The theology of the end times. We convince ourselves that what really matters is getting to heaven and that this life is not that important, except as a context in which we say yes or no to Jesus. We're really just visiting this planet, waiting to leave it to be with him or for him to return and evacuate us somewhere. But you see this 'just visiting', this tourism, this Christian tourism mentality is just another way of withdrawing in the end and, at the same time, being caught in the temptation to assimilate because we don't think it matters. But you know what? It really does matter to God. The movement of the Lord's Prayer is the very opposite of this mindset, isn't it? We pray, 'Let your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'. The movement is God coming from heaven to earth, not people going from earth to heaven.

[00:19:12] So how do we avoid these temptations? Can we avoid feeling alienated and withdrawing, or assimilating? And I think there's a really important question for us to ask as leaders: can the church recover? This is Capital C, the Church of Jesus in Britain. And we're thinking unity here, aren't we? Not, OK, I'm all right, but the Church – God's delight, Jesus' bride. Can we recover a proper confidence in the gospel in the midst of contemporary culture? And the biblical response is that we live as ambassadors. It's a completely different way of understanding exile, isn't it? It's not a place of judgement. It's not punishment.

I'm not needing to feel alienated. I haven't been forced into it. God's mission, according to Ephesians 1.10, is nothing less than the reconciliation of all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

[00:20:19] And the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians, that the message of reconciliation, of all of that reconciling, has been entrusted to us. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors. Like captive aliens and visitors and tourists, ambassadors are strangers – they're still strangers in a foreign land. They're away from their true home. We're citizens of heaven, friends, are we not? But they're not living as strangers unwillingly or unintentionally, they're not sleepwalking into things. They're living as a stranger in a foreign land on purpose. Can you see how the Scripture reframes the experience of exile? Yes, you are not of this world because I've called you out of this world. You are no more of this world than I am, said Jesus. That's a remarkable statement when you think about it. Ambassadors live in a strange land because they've been sent there for a reason.

[00:21:20] Now, that's how the Prophet Jeremiah challenged the exiles, isn't it? Don't listen to the false prophets. Rather, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I've carried you. And, you know, we've heard several times from John 17, Jesus' prayer, his heart prayer, my disciples are not of the world any more than I am of the world. As you, Father, have sent me into the world, I have sent them. That word 'sent' is where we get the Latin 'missio'. 'Missio' means to be sent. We are called to Jesus, but we're then sent into the world. So each and every one of us is an ambassador, a missionary. What we've made a special niche job title is a bit like the word saint in the New Testament. There aren't just a few. We're all saints. Because of the holiness and the setting apart that happens by the Holy Spirit. And we're all sent, we're all missionaries, into some part of God's world that he wants us to represent him in, to witness for him in and to be his emissary.

[00:22:42] So have a quick think where you might be tempted – to withdraw, to assimilate. And what kind of stranger are you? You don't have to discuss this with your neighbour or pass the ... this is a private reflection: Have you checked out? Do you find yourself feeling unwilling in this context of cultural dissonance? I know whenever I ask myself this question, I usually find those parts of my life where, yeah, I'm being an ambassador, and then there's other parts of my life where I think, you know what? Actually, I think I'm in ghetto mode here, I'm just in fight back. Or, you know, what am I doing here? I'm just assimilating. This is not, this is not kingdom.

[00:23:51] We're thinking about what it feels like to be a Christian in contemporary society and the temptations that those feelings can lead us into, right? And part of the reason for these feelings, including how overwhelmed we feel as leaders, is also to do with the way the Church has been shaped by the legacy of the Christian history in our nation. Julian's touched on this a bit already. For many centuries in Britain, Christians have been used to being the dominant cultural force, haven't we? Operating at the centres of political and financial power. And that legacy of Christendom has distorted our sense of church and mission, all right? So it's important, that's why I'm going to take a few moments to think about, how did we get here?

[00:24:44] During the 19th century in particular, we developed a kind of default model in which local churches here at home in this country were places to gather, pray, preach, worship. But mission was increasingly conceptualised as something that happened overseas. And, you know, my own organisation, the British and Foreign Bible Society, played a massive role in that growth of overseas mission during that period. And of course, much of that was amazing, fantastic work of God. But gradually we began to associate the word mission with something you did somewhere else, right? And we'd have this bizarre situation, you know, and you will have examples of this, where somebody is working as an accountant in a business in your town with a whole bunch of non-Christians around them. And they feel this call and they join a mission agency to go and help with a mission somewhere else in the world. And they're going to work as an accountant and now they're a missionary. Well, yes, they might be, praise God. But you know what? They were a missionary before. And you see, this kind of mindset is what we've got to get past.

[00:26:06] All of that mindset was reflected in the way we trained church leaders, right? We developed a model in which we assumed a pastor teacher with lots of theological training – any of you who've struggled through seminary – it's not really who you are, you know what I'm talking about. Oh, the only practical bit might be how do you do a wedding, a funeral and a baptism? Really, right? But Ephesians 4, in my Bible at least, has apostles, prophets and evangelists as well as pastor teachers. Those are all needed for the building up of the church. But you look in vain for many seminary curricula that would actually seek to develop those gifts.

[00:26:48] We also developed at the same time friends, and I'm sorry to labour this, but these are the things we have to expunge if we're going to move on, we developed such a habit of a sacred secular divide, particularly in Protestantism. The Catholics have been safe from this, by and large, by their social teaching. But what it's meant is that discipleship in local churches has become more and more focused only on the personal and the familial. These are really important. But Christianity in Britain became far too comfortable with the assumption that Britain was Christian. We're in a Christian country, so we don't need to think about mission here. We don't need a disciple for it. Local churches didn't see themselves as orientated towards the flourishing of their town and city. Discipleship programs aren't focused on empowering and equipping the laity – the whole people of God – for transformational witness in all the different spheres of society. All of the workplaces they are involved in. Meanwhile, the mission agencies are all focused overseas. And sadly, this is a very and I mean this I'm very serious about it – all of this hastened the secularisation of this country. We are partly responsible for the situation we're in. And we are used to blaming the atheists. But we knew better, didn't we?

[00:28:27] So what I've described is a far cry from the New Testament witness. And missiologists and historians of the early Church identified two primary ways in which the church grew (I've got to remember to click the clicker) and transformed ancient society. First, they planted local congregations. That's number one. They planted local congregations that provided a radical alternative example, a living gospel, right? An example of a different way of being in community. (This is, a fantastic piece of artwork. You can blame me for it.) So these communities grew organically as people in the surrounding society were provoked, challenged by the Christlike lifestyle that they saw. The local congregation functioned in this way. They are a gathered community. People are seeing them together. They're seeing a radical love demonstrated. They're seeing the dignity and the care that's shared. 'They let even women and slaves attend their meetings,' was the disgusted sneer of one contemporary Roman critic. So what people were seeing was an embassy of the Kingdom of God. A community in its gathered life that projected and to some extent embodied the qualities of that kingdom in its common life, right? Mission was in the culture, is the way Sarah would put it.

[00:30:25] But this embassy community was not only gathered, it also functioned as a scattered community. And that was also the Church – the Church is not only the Church when it's gathered friends, it's also the Church when it's scattered. And this is part of God's incredible design. It's like a lung breathing in and out. This scattered community, every member rich, poor, slave free, male, female, they're involved witnessing in all these different parts of society. And the household codes that we so easily read as a bit sort of dull and private, these are incredibly radical political documents in the New Testament about how you live in public so that people will see your lives and give praise to your Father in heaven, because the household in the ancient world is the workplace. It is the social gathering. It is also the family. So, a radical emphasis on this dynamic ambassadorial community gathered, scattered with this sending mindset of radical embodiment of the kingdom.

[00:31:37] So can you see that the New Testament church was missional just by existing, right? It wasn't something they had to sort of write a mission statement about. The very existence of the Church expresses the mission, the sending of God. It's his mission, not ours, but we get to participate. So, you know, no wonder that the biblical scholar Chris Wright has said, 'God does not have a mission for his church. He has a church for his mission.' Right?

[00:32:25] There's more to learn from the New Testament record because these local congregations were planted and nurtured by a different kind of structure – a community that one scholar described as the missionary bands. Think of the Apostle Paul with Barnabas, Timothy, Titus, Priscilla, Aquila, Epaphroditus – all these names. Whereas the congregations were planted very firmly in a place, he wrote to the letter of the church in Corinth, for example, right? The missionary bands are trans local. They're travelling constantly. They're planting, they are establishing new churches. They come back, they appoint local leaders, they mentor them. They build up to strengthen the health of the local congregations. And both of these two structures are working together. The local in this powerful organic demonstration of what the future could be like as heaven invades earth, and the trans local – nurturing and growing these like a gardener, if you like. And discipleship took place at both levels. Paul's missionary bands nurtured and mentored leaders. Local leadership amplified that teaching with the kind of discipleship, friends, that formed thousands of believers who were willing to give their lives for Jesus in the Roman arenas, rather than compromise their witness.

[00:33:53] So these two separate, but reinforcing local and trans local structures return again and again through church history. We see them in the monastic renewals, the vow of stability in the Benedictine. The mendicant orders who travel and preach, like the roving Dominicans. Think about Wesley and the circuit preachers and the powerful model of the local class meeting. Over and over again, we see these structures reappearing in some form. And we have versions of them today, but often we've unhelpfully narrowed them. Mission agencies, trans local groups, focus too much on a definition of mission activity, which is not nurturing the local church. My organisation has been guilty of that. But, you know, the local church is absolutely at the centre of God's purposes. That's his mission strategy. We are his mission strategy. But local churches too often have ignored the flourishing of the town and city. It's got too much about personal familial care of the flock. Now, that is so vital, isn't it? It's where we, that's where we experience the core, the heart of the Father. But the Father wants us to get beyond that and grow up and engage and be sent out into all of the spheres of life around us.

[00:35:26] All right, so, if we want to think about what it would look like to inhabit that identity, we need to consider our fourth question. And, the time, what cultural time is it? What's going on? And very simply, I want to suggest to you that we've got to a point in the culture where we are asking this question, though not in this way: now what? See, the culture has done everything it thought would lead to life and happiness. It's chucked out all of the remnants of Christianity. It's got rid of all the narratives. We're post-Christian, post-truth, post-everything. But it turns out that we've now got a whole load of new problems, right? All of the individualism – we've ended up lonely. We've got a mental health epidemic. You know, you didn't, you don't need me to tell you all these things. We, we're still so obsessed aren't we? We're frightened by the stories of techno capitalism, but we're still consuming like crazy, right? We're still addicted to it. And we talk all the time about equality, anti-racism, anti-discrimination, but actually, our society is getting more tribal, divided, fractious, unkind. And our rejection of the Christian story, has resulted not in flourishing, but fragmentation.

[00:37:18] So now what? Now what? This is what the culture's feeling and some of its thinkers are saying out loud. Some of the atheist secular humanists are saying, I think we might have gone a bit too far. They're starting to come back and look again at this founding narrative that built our civilisation for over a thousand years. People like the journalist Douglas Murray, the psychologist Jordan Peterson, the historian Tom Holland. You can look these people up. But there's such a growing babble of intellectual noises now that are all asking this question. We've gone past a dead end sign, right? So our culture is asking this question, now what? Now, this is what you don't see in the census, there's a shift away from unbelief. This is part of a massive study with the Wales elements shown. Belief in God is increasing. Unbelief is decreasing.

[00:38:26] Now, it may not be belief in the God of the Bible, but this is certainly not ongoing secularisation, is it? And we did a huge study to try to get under this back in 2018, to understand what was going on. We surveyed 20,000 people. And if you know survey methodology, you know that's ridiculously large. But we wanted to get very careful evidence. And we identified eight mission audiences in Britain. Bottom left of this, they're cold, very little belief in God. No interest in finding out either. And then top right, it's hot. The

opposite. But do you see the big bit in the middle? See, the media discussion is dominated by those opposite extremes, isn't it? You'd think there wasn't any middle. In 2018, that warm, spiritually open is 20 per cent of the population. 20 per cent of the population. So these anecdotes you're hearing and you're experiencing and you feel it in your gut, they're not just anecdotes, friends. That 20 per cent, moreover, is growing. Since we did that initial study, we've seen a near 10 per cent fall in the colder attitudes and the warmer attitudes are growing. There's more and more openness in our society. You can find out, if you want to pour into the details: lumino.bible.

[00:39:54] Let me close. So what now? There are huge challenges, aren't there? But huge opportunities. You know, we, we're still going to get some of the old challenges from militant secularists. In fact, they might get worse because they're panicking. And there's going to be challenges from other faiths, new faiths. But we've faced all of this before as the Church. None of that is a problem. Jesus has already defeated all the idols that manifest themselves in these different ways. The biggest challenges we have are internal. And central is our loss of discipleship, our narrowing of mission, our ignorance of the Bible and our tendency to act before we pray and then ask God to help us out of the mess we create. And I know I'm just as guilty, but you know, I've said this God is mobilising his people and he wants to change these things, right? That's my conviction. When the culture is wondering where to go, God is sending his people, right, because Jesus is the answer. And we're carrying that answer. Mobilising means calling up, preparing a company of people for intentional action. Friends, this is what we believe God is doing in our generation. I think you believe that too. But this is a serious call. When the King musters the troops, right, you take it seriously because it's an issue of loyalty. Are you coming now? Now's the time. We're mustering. God's mobilising us.

[00:41:39] That's my four minute warning ... And, you know, that's what this whole conference is about, isn't it? It's about the mustering, the mobilising, the equipping of God for the sending of his people into the world. And let me give you four elements of a strategy for this. (And then to get the detail, you're going to have to buy the book. But, and there's a special offer today only, and tomorrow.) Ambassadors established an embassy, this is the British Embassy in Washington. Round the edge, there's a line. One side it says, United States of America. The other side it says, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Embassies are sovereign territory of the home country, even when they're in a foreign country. And this is, when we create an embassy we are saying, Jesus Christ is Lord here. This is the sovereign territory of the king, and it's going to project the values of the home country. So when people come in to our environments, they need to experience the safety, the love, the generosity, the care of God, the power of God's love and the presence of his Spirit. And that's not just for the gathered – of course, it's for the gathered community – but we need to be teaching our people, this is for the scattered church, right? So whatever influence you've got in your workplace – it might be a desk, it might be the counter where you're doing retail, it might be a little part of an assembly line – in that place, this is the sovereign territory of the King of kings. This is an embassy. Anyone who encounters me within my frame of influence, that's what they're going to encounter. This is what an embassy is about.

[00:43:29] And of course, we need to know the mission. So the question here, as you can see, to focus the mind is, are you reading or preaching on the truncated Bible? Do you see this? This starts in Genesis three with sin and the fall and ends in Revelation 20 with the judgement. And for many of us that's, that's the Bible we read, right? We forgot so, and it's not wrong – it's the gospel of salvation from sin – but we're missing the big picture, right? God loves creation and he's not given up on it. We're not in Plan B friends. The gospel is a commitment to Plan A. So, you know, every part of creation is designed to give praise and honour to him, including human work. Our care of the garden and our cultivation of the potential. God didn't create a perfect world, he created a good world in which we could work and keep building it, with him. Isn't that amazing? He left us space to keep working with him, and he hasn't stopped wanting his people to understand the breadth and the depth of that mission, of the reconciliation of all things.

[00:44:54] Ambassadors know the mission. Otherwise they're kind of just in a nice embassy environment. But they also need to learn the language, haven't they? We know, this is cross ambassador missionaries. We always think, okay, language learning. And that's right. All of those different audiences I showed you, all

of the different generations, Tik Tok, Instagram, they all have their little cultural dialects. We've got to learn these languages. And do you know what? These audiences are not just out there, they're in your congregation. So this is our data. This is a massive dataset. You would think the church is full of the hot, top right of that diagram. And that's true, but only 70 per cent on average. That means on average, 30 per cent of your congregation, they want to be there but they probably are very Bible ignorant. They might not read the Bible. They might think the Bible in fact is, you know, we'd be better off if we didn't have the Bible. They're undisciplined, they feel there's something important to be in here, in this room that's drawn them in, but they're still searching because they're actually lost. They just happened to have crashed into something that feels safe for now. But, you know, are they going to go deeper into discipleship or exit to Buddhist mindfulness? These people are in our congregations. If you want to know how to communicate with these people: lumino.bible. I was going to show you a video, but I don't want Sarah to cut my head off, so I'm not going to do that now. But it's all on that site: lumino.bible.

[00:46:44] This is Eugene Peterson – just to wrap up – from The Message. Because, because this mobilisation is about getting the armour on, isn't it?

[00:46:52] 'Be prepared. You're up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over but the shouting you'll still be on your feet. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You'll need them throughout your life. God's Word,' (Bible Society. I love this text.) 'God's Word is an indispensable weapon.'

[00:47:19] The sword of the Spirit – do you want to go into battle without a sword? We've got to learn to wield the sword again. It has enormous power. It's the only book in the universe that's alive. And in the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Diplomacy is all about learning those languages and bringing reconciliation in all of life.

[00:47:43] Those are some of the major elements of a renewed missional imagination, for Church in our generation, that I believe God is inviting us into. I'm going to stop there. Thank you so much. The book, and here's a few more resources: *The Bible Course* – if you haven't seen that, check it out. Reframe takes some of these things that I've been talking about into a video course. I'd also encourage those of you who are thinking about or equipping your people, LICC's Fruitfulness on the Frontline is a fantastic resource. Thank you so much. God bless.