

THE CHURCH PLANTING PODCAST

with Greg Nettle



Greg: Hey friends. Welcome to the church planning podcast. I'm Greg Nettle and I serve as president of Stadia Church Planting. Really looking forward to today's guest. He's a long time friend. We've worked together in ministry for numerous years. We've had fun with our families vacationing together, and we've even co-authored two books together. Disciples Who Make Disciples and Four With One. In, I'm talking about Alex Absalom. Alex and his wife Hannah, Lead, Daisy Resourcing ministries today, where they help churches and leaders and just Christians in general discover the voice of God. How to listen to the voice of God, how to follow the voice of God. They're all about the missional church. And just bring a wealth of experience and information to the church Planning podcast. Let's welcome Alex Absalom. So, so excited to welcome my good friend, my longtime colleague Alex Absalom to the Church Planting podcast. Welcome, Alex. So good to see him.

Alex: Wow, it's a real honor to be here. It's lovely to see you, Greg. And hello to everyone on the podcast.

Greg: Yeah. Hey Alex. So first of all, let's, you, you've got so many irons in the fire. You kind of always have, you were a leader on the forefront of the missional movement. But the thing I wanna focus on, to start off, we'll touch on missional a little bit cuz you and I have done so much work on that together. I wanna talk about living supernaturally, the naturally supernatural, because that was something you kind of were moving into. Very profound way when we, we had been on staff together at River Tree and then kind of God had us going in different directions, but you were really moving into the naturally supernatural. Talk about that.

Alex: Well, I mean, what does that even mean now? So I think it's, it's recognizing that Jesus, when he sends out the disciples, and that's absolutely the original lot, but that means us as well. He always needs to wrap it around with heal the sick, drive out demons. Sometimes for a bit of a laugh it's raise the dead as well. Proclaimed the gospel, proclaim the coming of the kingdom. And I think so many of us in the Western Church, we just do that last bit and we've removed this supernatural aspect of what it means to represent Jesus and to, and to, and to share the gospel.

Greg: Okay, so wait, wait, wait, wait. So I, I, you know, so we see, we see supernatural stuff. Yep. All around the globe. Third world situations, people are healed in. Even, you know, there's some of our church plants that report to us from Asia, literally raising from the dead. And all kinds of things. But you know, you know me and the devil's advocate here we don't see that in the Western church. You know, what's the deal?

Alex: Well, I think I'm gonna give you two answers to that. So I think one is we do see it, it's just, it doesn't get that well publicized. So I've seen hundreds and hundreds of people healed what we have and thousands of prophetic words and deliverances and all sorts of stuff. So it does go, and that's just us. I mean, I know lots and lots it tears going on. So that's the first thing. And it's always gone on church history as well. So it's a complete myth that it died out. But I think, but I think you do raise an interesting question, which is I think we in the west have been raised in. We're so shaped by the enlightenment worldview. So we're so rationalistic. It's we, we've removed that supernatural realm from a lot of our day to day thinking. So in reality, a lot of people who have, who are, they're believers, they're Christians, but they function no differently to atheists cuz there's no room for a supernatural role in their everyday life and their everyday expresses. So we always respond to situations out of our own gift, our own resources, our. Wisdom or organizational powers, and those are great things. We wanna have those. But I, I, I want to argue that as well. We need to be directly leaning into the power of the spirit and how we go about our mission.

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Greg: Okay. So, you know, lots of church planners listening, church leaders. So just kind of how do we lean into that?

Alex: So I think it's okay. I. Gosh, so many to get here. All right, I'll give you a philosophical and I'll give you a practical philosophically. If I had a whiteboard with us, now, I would draw a Venn diagram. Three of lapping circles are label one disciple making. Obviously everyone's gonna say we're about to making disciples. Discipl making disciples. Second one is being on mission, where to go with the gospel. The third one is being naturally supernatural. We have to do it in the power of the spirit, and you want where all. Intersect. I think that's how you build a kingdom culture and what I observe in most. Evangelical churches in the west is, we do the first two, but we don't do much of the third. We might do a bit of praying, but we don't really lean into it, and I think it's, And what that culture ends up doing is it can be, can bear a lot of fruit, but it ends up in a culture that feels quite striving. And it feels quite, it feels excessively task oriented at times. And I think there's a grace we need to lean into, which is we choose to allow the spirit to move. So to be more specific and practical there's a phrase we teach people with discipling, which is, Can I pray for you? Can I pray for you? So when you're with your next door neighbor and they're going, I'm super stressed about my, I had this happen the other day, so when I got my people of peace he's in financial services right now. That's well he does mortgages and that's way down. And so he's, he's pretty stressed about it. And so I just said, you know, I. So I'm praying for you that you get more business. Would it be right? Can I pray for you about that stuff? And so have a little conversation and pray around that. You know, when someone's pouring, I play, as you know, Greg, I play real football, not your fake football. And so I play here a couple of times a week and so I've had a number of times when, you know, someone gets injur, And I'll just sense that spread prompt. And I'll say, This might sound crazy, but can I pray for you? Cause I've seen Jesus heal people. And sometimes people get healed and sometimes they don't get healed. But it, it's that willingness to, to lean into a supernatural lifestyle. And I think our culture is so open to it. I, I, it strikes his list. Interesting factoid. This is non-scientific, but when I've offered to pray for the sick, I've only ever been turned down by Christ. I've never had someone who's not a believer turn me down. They're all like, they might look a bit like, Okay, hadn't really crossed my brain before, or, but I tell you what, the majority of time people will start weeping or they'll just like, I'd love you to pray for me. Okay?

Greg: So when, when, But you, but when you, Most people, when you say do you mind if I pray for you? They're thinking, Sure. You can pray for me in, you know, tomorrow morning in your prayer time or tonight before you go to bed, but what you're saying is you're praying for them right now.

Alex: Right now. So I'll just say, so say, so say you were my neighbor and you were talking about, say, you say you've got a bust up knee, right? So I'll go you know, you talking about. You know, and I'll go, Craig, this might sound, I don't how spiritual you are, but I've seen Jesus heal people. Could I just pray for you that Jesus would heal for you, heal your knee? Cause I think he'd like to do that. And you'll kind of go alright. And I, so, so I say, okay, it's got a hand on your shoulder and it's gonna pray for you now. And our prayer, real short, simple prayer like, Dear Jesus, thank you, love Greg. Please would you heal his knee?

Greg: And nobody's gonna get upset by that. I mean you haven't had, you know, Cause that sounds like kind of a scary thing to do sometimes.

Alex: Well, here, here's what I think. Here's how I think people hear it. So people who are not safe, they hear it as an authentic expression of love and of care. Cuz they know hopefully. If it's someone I'm in relationship with, they know that I'm a follower of Jesus and that this is just how I do stuff. And it

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might be a bit unusual, very unusual for them, but they, they, they receive it as an act of kindness and care. And again, going back to my hypothesis that most people are spiritual, but most people are not militant atheists. Most people are somewhere in that mass, in the middle. So they, they like the idea of something spiritual happening in their. Yeah.

Greg: I think it's a helpful thing for sure to, to actually engage right at the moment. Alex, talk about, you talked, I'm gonna go back to something else you said that was so important, right? The spirit prompted you. Yes. You're on the soccer pitch, the football pitch. Yeah. And somebody's hurting. The spirit prompted you. Now, I'm a firm believer in the Holy Spirit promptings and the fact that we don't listen. Enough or act on those promptings. Can you, can you talk about that a little bit? How do we hear the spirit promptings? How do we respond?

Alex: Yeah. Well if you go back to our time together at River Tree 10 years ago and one, the, one of the conversations we ended up having a lot, and I remember you hammering this away in your preaching, which was brilliant, and how the, how you got the staff trained is the definition, viral definition of a disciple. You know, discipled is someone who hears what Jesus is saying and puts it and, you know. What's here in a bay? What's Jesus saying? How am I responding? And so if the essence of a cyclist, we have to hear what Jesus is saying. He is speaking all the time, but normally we, we drown him out either with self doubt or with noise or our own business, but rushing to the next task. So there's a, there's a discipline of. Learning to spot the, still quite, quite a voice of the spirit and he'll just dig you in the ribs and just give you a little nudge or a prompt and it, I, he doesn't tend to shout that stuff at us. I mean, sometimes he does, but he doesn't tend to normally, I think he likes to just give us that invitational piece to walk with him in that moment. Cooperate. So you get a sense in your heart like, Oh yeah, okay, there's so and so perhaps all to stop or, or is that sort of thing. And I

Greg: think it can come down to, you know, Julie and I moved into the city. And of course now that we're in the city setting, more than ever we're running into some homeless people. And so often there's the asks for money. And, and Julie and I try to discern, okay, who do we give, Who do we say yes to? Who do we say no to? And so forth. And a lot of it, a lot of times Alex comes down to spiritual promptings, right? Where. Most of the time, honestly, it's no, because not any good's coming out of it with what's going on, but occasionally there is the, yes, this is that. Spiritual prompting talk about this in the church planters world where they're trying to meet people where they're sitting in a coffee shop. I mean, you know, it's hard work what they're doing. They're out building launch teams. And so how does this spiritual prompting play into that at a very practical day to day level?

Alex: I would say it's, it's. Recognition that you as the planter don't have all the answers. So it is a willingness at times just to pause and say, Lord, what do you want me to do here? And it could be as simple as you're in a restaurant. Having this happened the other night, we, we were with some folks having a meal and there was just this prompt in my spirit to, to just to ask the Lord for a prophetic word for the server. And it turned out to be really accurate and, Very moved. So, but I could easily have, easily have swept that one away. And I think I would still be totally save and Jesus would still love me and he would still use me in the future. So it's not, Do you know what I mean? I think again, needs give ourselves grace to get it wrong and all rest of it. But I think it's, it's, you know, if you are that in that planted context, it's. Aware that the spirit will help us know who to speak to. So say you are in that cafe and you're thinking, Okay, Lord, I've got a little bit of time. Do you want me to talk to someone here? Just be quiet then for 15, 20, 30 seconds and see who, who. It's almost like paying attention to where your attention is drawn. So I've learned that often when, when my attention is drawn to something or to someone, if I'm walking in the spirit, there's a often that is the spirit's prompt. So I just kind of, there's some guy I can't, you know, kinda like get drawn to and I feel something. So I

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think I'm just gonna go with it and trust. That's the spirit's prompting. And here's the thing, I think the worst case scenario is I go over and have a little conversation as long as I'm obedient to what the Bible teaches about, say. For instance says First Corinthians 14, three, The prophecy is given to strengthen and encouraging comfort. So as long as all I share is strengthening, encouraging, comforting, I'm not doing anything wrong. Because you know, if it's just an Alex word of encouragement to this person, that's the good thing. Cause the Bible tells us to encourage people. Now I don't have to put big Jesus lights all over it and everything else. You just get on and do it. And then if they get interested, they'll start to ask about the spiritual undergirding. So I think there's a freedom about this. We need to step. Yeah,

Greg: and so you're not talking about me walking up to the stranger in the restaurant and saying, I have a prophetic word for you. I think you're gonna get on an airplane and you better not do it because your plane might crash. That's not the norm. So it, it could happen if Jesus actually said that to you. It would need to be obedient. But that's, you said, strengthening and courage.

Alex: You know I think the Lord would train you along the journey to, to have confidence in the, I think again, spiritual gifts. This is not, again, here's the thought. Spiritual gifts don't just plop into our laps fully formed. We have to develop. And I think we recognize that the more natural ones, right? We know when someone starts doing hospitality, it's not gonna be perfect. Or we know when someone starts to preach, it's not gonna be the best sermon you've ever heard. So why is it any different with the gift of healing or the gift of prophecy? But what's really good, What's the theology come from? It's got to appear perfect. It's nonsense. It's not biblical. We have to learn to develop these gifts and to mature in them. And so that's why I think it's, it's creating. Guardrails so people can develop and grow, but then you'll see, you know, certain ones will flourish and get more competent and a high level of effectiveness in them.

Greg: That's just a profound word. I, I've not ever had it framed that way because it's absolutely true. We, we expect people, if they have the gift of leadership, We know they're not gonna be a great raw leader to start with, but they're gonna need mentored and coached and all of these different things. So why would we expect that of other spiritual gifts? That's, Yep. That's a great word for all of us to hear. Okay. Let's come back to now the, the church planters and church leaders. That are out there and they have this body of Christ. Talk about the importance of prayer in the supernatural world, naturally, supernatural world. I mean, you, and one of the things that I loved about our relationship when we were actually living in close proximity, if you remember Jason and Susie Lance you know, and my wife, Julie and I, and you and Hannah would meet once a week. To spend time praying together and speaking into one another's lives. And it was such a rich time and one of the things I, I miss most, quite frankly talk about that and why we need to be doing that, please.

Alex: Well, I mean, as you know, as you indicated, just then, you know, we're not meant to have the Christian life solo. We're meant to do it in community. Our culture is so individualized and segmented that that's, that's feels quite radical these days, which obviously wasn't for the early church, but with the prayer piece, it's. Again, it goes for me that that's going back to that supernatural circle, which is, it's saying, Lord, we really are dependent upon you. And I know we believe that, but I think, and a lot of times as believers we don't, that doesn't get demonstrated in our day to day lives. And so there's something about that prayerful dependency upon. Jesus and pursuing him for the things that are on our hearts and being willing to wait. Sometimes we get it instantly and sometimes we have to wait. But I think that's, that's a thing that really pleases the Lord. He wants us to operate like that. We, we need to be people who live in that supernatural dependency. And there's a, there's that balance of, you know, it's interesting, when did cycles try doing stuff and the. Leading into life of prayer and life of

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spirit being more supernatural and things don't work out. Jesus seems to talk about two things to them. He talks about faith and he talks about perseverance, and so he challenges. You know, often he talks about the faith dynamic in healings and the stuff that goes on, so that's clearly part of it, but also talks about we have to persevere and not everything's gonna happen at first. We have to be ones who persist and will keep on knocking on the door and so on. And so I. There's those, I see those at play all the time. There's this persistent expectancy we come to when we engage in that more supernatural realm when we come to the Lord. So there is an expectancy of a child with their father. Well, of course he's gonna give me good gifts. Why would he give me a scorpion? But then there's also a persistence because I recognize the kingdom is both now and also not yet. And so when I'm, you know, when you are planting a new initiative for the kingdom, some bits are gonna go gloriously well, and some are just gonna be. Just mind frustrating and annoying and it's like, Lord, what's going wrong here? And it's not because you're walking in sea, it's not you're doing something grievously out of his will. It's just for some reason we have those frustrating and vexing periods of time as well. And I think prayer is part of the way in which we just keep reentered upon Jesus and keep going. You know?

Greg: Alex, I think that word expectancy is something. It's so easy, like when we're, we're on, when we're on the front lines, I, I remember when, you know, I was helping start a church in Dublin, Ireland. Man, I had great expectancy. I expected God to move. I expected God to lead me and stuff. And, but somewhere along the way, then we get in developed churches and we get in comfortable situations and we start working out of our own striving, right? Our own gift. And all of a sudden that's expectancy can go away. And I think that's such an important word for all of us. Are we living as followers of Jesus with expectancy That God's gonna show up in some profound and powerful. Simple, small voice still voice way. So listen for all of those out there now, they're going, Yeah, boy, I'd, I'd like to experience that. Like I'm thinking even about myself because Julie and I haven't found that, you know, kind of covenant group that we're praying with weekly now in, since we've moved up here to Cleveland and I'm kinda longing for that now. Give us some really practical advice for, for anyone out. Who's longing for that or is going, Man, I'd like to try that. What, you know, who should they pick?

Alex: How should they pick?

Greg: You know, what should they do?

Alex: So I think for, for that, I would, I would just, Pray and say, Lord, I'd really like to be in a group, so could you, could you show me two or three people to do this with? Or two or three couples who doing as couples. So I think first of all, ask him. I would then, if you are in that moment, just, just allow names to come to mind and rather being irritated by, Oh, why is that person coming to my head? I'm trying to pray. Maybe that's the Holy Spirit speaking. Perhaps draw it down. Something I've sometimes done when I've been. Say if I'm in a church gathering and I want to, I'm trying to look who should I recruit or, or talk, you know, engage with something, I'll just say, Holy Spirit, would you show me who I need to talk to? And I'm looking across. The space and I'm allowing the spirit just to draw my attention to someone. And I may or may not be right, but more than not, that is right. So if you're thinking about people, then it, you might not be physically with them, but you can just, or look through your phone context if that's gonna stimulate you or jot down a list, a long list of names, and then say, Lord, who, who might be some. And then, so I think that's how I'd start to identify. And then I would just do something low key. Reach out, say, trying to get coffee some time, or do you wanna come around for a drink or, or whatever. And just see how it feels and I'll just build it incrementally. Don't do what I mean. Know you don't do this, don't do it. We're in a church now where there's lots of young adults and they'll come and say things like they've just meet you. And they say, Will you be my

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mentor? And I'm kind like, Ooh, . That's, you're like, you're jumping from. We've just met and now I want to get, you know, married to you sort of thing. So I think there's that bridging process. I know you weren't about to do that, but just for folks watching.

Greg: No, but I mean, I think back to that, that's so true. You know, the sheep know the voice of the shepherd and. I, that's always been such an important passage, scripture for me in so many ways because if, if we are the sheep and Jesus is our shepherd, we should be able to recognize his voice and respond to his voice. And I'll never forget you, you talk about that in the mentoring and promptings and so forth. I, I remember flying out to Colorado Springs and meeting with Wes Stafford. It was for the first time. If you remember this story, Alex. Al Wes was the Compassion President of Compassion International at the time, and, you know, huge didn't, huge organization, didn't know me from Adam, but agreed to meet with me. I flew out, We spent two hours in his office, which was longer than he had agreed to spend with me, but it was just this warm, wonderful, Holy Spirit led time and at the. Wes said, Well, let's pray together. And as we were praying, I sensed God prompting me. And so we finished praying and I said to Wes, I said, You know, Wes, I, I know this is subjective and so if this is not for you I totally get if you say no or not now or whatever, But I said, I just felt prompted by the Holy Spirit to ask you to become my mentor and Wes without batting, and I. Well, you're not gonna believe this, Greg, but while we were praying, I sensed God saying to me, I'm supposed to pour my life into this young man. Wow. And that, that, you know, that became a multi-year journey of Wes becoming my mentor and traveling together. And now Wes is on the. Stadia bored and is just a dear, dear friend, But I think back, what if I hadn't list? I mean, you know, that relationship changed the trajectory of my life, of my family's life. And, and what if, what if I hadn't? What if I thought, ah, nah, that was just me wishful thinking. I'm not gonna ask. Right? And how many times do we go through life like that and not respond?

Alex: 100%. I mean, that's a brilliant illustration and I. Okay. Here's, here's a funny little phrase. I, I would say this to, to all of us as leaders, and particularly those, those watching who are in more established situations, which is we should always be placing ourselves into moments and into situations where unless the Holy Spirit comes through, we're gonna look like. Muppets or something like that. Yeah. And I think too easy to always have everything where it's kinda like you, you, you know, pretty much what the outcome's gonna be. So that was a moment of vulnerability and risk for you and it, And I think particularly the place of mission is a place where we should be doing that. We should be having things where there's no guaranteed outcomes. And, and, Because so often we don't, but that's, that's the exciting moment where the Holy Spirit can step in and do stuff when you off to pray for someone for healing. That is a, I've just jumped off the 10 meter diving board. Yeah, yeah.

You know, let's see if the law puts water in the pool before I get there, it's

Greg: Hey, so Alex, we just have a couple more minutes and I, I've got so much to talk with you about. I, I think I'm just gonna tease everyone right now and say, Oh, we're gonna do another podcast if it's okay with you, and talk about nationality and, and stuff because this, this, this is so rich in what we're talking about. And so, kind of as we wrap things up here if people wanna get in contact with you because. Consulting. Now you come in and work with, with churches. I know you're out in California, but I know you, you're out here in Cleveland and next time you're out here, I'm expect, I'm expecting your family to stay with us. So, ah, that I have that expectancy there, my brother. So how can people get in touch with you? Dandelion resources. We said that up front. He's, what's

Alex: the best way to reach? So we, a website, dandelion resourcing. And the image of the dandelion is, it's it's the, it's the idea of the wind of the spirit comes and blows the seeds and they scatter and go

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everywhere, and they can pop into the most unlikely situations, a crack of concrete, put down a route, pop up a store, flower seeds, multiply again. And that's how the kingdom growth is meant to be. So I think it's a great visual. You know, for stadia planters out there and in deep churches are established, but, so it's dandelion resourcing. We do free stuff every week. Little short training videos on one of those three circles I talked about at the beginning. We have coaching cohorts. We do work with churches and also we have a specifically with the naturally supernatural. We filmed a naturally supernatural course, which comes. It's six week blocks and what we do says we've had it professionally filmed, and so it's my wife, Hannah, and myself, and we teach, but there's lots of bits we break. There's workbooks to go with it. There's practical application questions and every time there's practical homework, so it, so you will get stretched. So ideal for groups. So that might be a great resource for people to check out. It's very inexpensive, so I think you'll find that super.

Greg: Alex Absalom. Dandelion resources. I, I, I almost said the French word is Deon as I as you know, and means tooth of the lion, which is pretty cool, right? Is we got the teeth of the lion out there with dandelion resourcing as well. Alex and Hannah, they're the real deal. Please contact them and reach out to them. And Alex, I look forward to talking with you again on the Church Planting podcast.

Alex: That'd be great. Thanks so much for having me!