

Transcript: [Beyond Winsomeness: Michael Clary on the Church Planting Movement and Contextualization in an Age of Sexual Confusion](#)

The Missions Podcast #390

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00:00:00:00 - 00:00:14:23

Michael Clary

So, it's like you can, like, hammer people. It's like you got to share your faith. You got to share the faith. We got to win the win the loss. I'm like, you can guilt people into it. But whenever they feel like I'm going out on a mission and the righteous, sovereign, holy, perfect, powerful God is going before me, he is preparing the soil.

00:00:14:23 - 00:00:32:06

Michael Clary

I just need to proclaim it boldly, without fear and call people to repentance. They go with a power and God works through that and it's more evangelistic effective. I think we've really gotten the missional thing backwards.

00:00:32:08 - 00:00:56:22

Alex Kocman

Greetings and welcome to the Missions Podcast, the show that explores your hard questions on missions, theology, and practice to help viewers think and thinkers go. I'm Alex Kocman, director of communications and engagement with ABWE. I'm flying solo today, everybody, so watch out. You never know what's going to happen when I'm without my better half. Of course, I'm referring to my co-host, Scott Dunford.

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Alex Kocman

But the good news is that I'm not completely alone because I am joined by a new friend here today. That friend is Michael Clary. Michael, I'm going to try and give you a little bit of an introduction, but honestly, this bio here is taken up like 12 lines on my screen. You've done a lot of things, my friend.

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Alex Kocman

And, among them being, writing, God's Good Design, a book on sexuality, on gender. you're also a pastor. A church planted, church planter. you, founded Christ the King in Cincinnati, helped plant Christ the King Eastern Hills in 2014. you launched the King's Domain last year with, Wade Thomas. And so want to hear more about that ministry.

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Alex Kocman

But, you know, why should I take all of your thunder away? Before we dive into our topic this morning, can you just let our listeners know a little bit more about who you are and what you're up to?

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Michael Clary

Yeah. thanks. It's an honor to be with you. I guess you can do a lot if you just, plod along, little by little.

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Alex Kocman

Amen. I can plod.

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Michael Clary

Yeah, but, you've already hit, the highlights. Being a church planter and pastor, that's my heart. My central calling is there's a shepherd to a local flock here in Cincinnati. I have a wife of. It'll be 25 years this June. So we've been married 24 years. We have four kids. they're all teenagers now. So Lord have mercy on our family and on the streets, as two of them are drivers.

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Michael Clary

And I got one more that'll be driving soon, but, yeah, that's the. That's the big picture. You hit the big, big highlights.

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Alex Kocman

Well, excellent. Well, one important feature of your ministry, and I've. I've followed you for a little while, and, I'm aware of some of what you've done. Course. Right now, at the time of this recording, just announced you're, a part of a group that's, running for some leadership positions within the Southern Baptist Convention. And so you're welcome to share more about that as well.

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Alex Kocman

But, one of the other key movements that you've been a part of, is, the church planting movement that really unfolded over the last, 15, 20 years or so. And, many people are familiar with characters like Mark Driscoll, The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill. many other people are familiar with networks like acts 29 that were connected to Driscoll and others, folks like Matt Chandler.

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Alex Kocman

And so there's been a movement and really, I think overwhelmingly, especially in those early days, we need more churches. There's so much there that's positive, right? Who wouldn't want to plant churches? even now I'm recording this, you know, coming to you from a missions agency. We plant churches not just in the US, but across more than 70 nations.

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Alex Kocman

And so we believe in church planting. But, maybe within that, maybe they were just breathing in sort of the tail fumes of, the emergent movement, you know, in the early 2000s, whatever it was, there was there's something in that movement, there was something in their approach that that maybe, maybe it led to us instability. and, I don't want to take away any of what you have to share with us, but, what was that church planting movement?

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Alex Kocman

How would you define it and describe it and just what's your analysis of how that unfolded? Looking back on it now.

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Michael Clary

There's the where you started with the Southern Baptist Convention. These, these things, have a lot of overlap because the Southern Baptist Convention is all about, it's we cooperate for the purpose of doing effective mission. Yeah. And so that's always been the heart of the Southern Baptist Convention. So we want to plant churches. We want to do it well.

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Michael Clary

So the seminaries are established for the purpose of training men for ministry. And all of the other entities are about advancing that primary mission. I got involved in church planning, right, right. As the emergent church movement was dying. It's breathing out its last. I guess I.

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Alex Kocman

Almost forgot the word emergent. I mean, if that tells you how little it matters now, I couldn't come up with the word emergent.

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Michael Clary

And it doesn't matter, because it was a, it was a compromised movement that. Yeah, God does work through imperfect means, but I think God establishes good means for a reason. And that we he blesses the means that he is appointed. So that's not an excuse for us to just, deny the, the, the appointed means that God has for us to plant churches.

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Michael Clary

So the emergent church movement, so I have noticed this thing and I've what I've noticed happening is that oftentimes people that have a really strong mission impulse, they that often is the excuse that allows a doctrinal error, to enter into the church. Yeah. because they're the, the, they're heart of the people themselves. But also what they're trying to do is we want to reach the lost.

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Michael Clary

We want to interface with the world very directly and do so in a in a church planning environment. We want people to interact with the church in such a way that they will hear

the gospel. And there is a big thing that I learned about whenever I was first planning a church was contextualization. And I cut my teeth on all things Tim Keller.

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Michael Clary

and in those early days, and Mark Driscoll was a part of that. The Gospel Coalition together for the Gospel Acts 29, this young, restless reformed church planning. I mean, it seemed like, okay, the kingdom of God is coming in with these, with these guys. it just seemed like there was so much hope and optimism and great things were happening, and a lot of people really got onto their coattails in the Southern Baptist Convention.

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Michael Clary

You know, they launched the send network, which is a rebranding of Nam. In some ways. They did the 25 cities, you know, this urban strategy. The point being that all these things were converging all at once. And, real concerted effort with hope and optimism of reaching the world, starting with cities and then our country, but reaching the world for Christ.

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Michael Clary

So I would say God did a lot of great things through that. But there was so much error and compromise baked in. And it's an error in compromise of the sort that isn't obvious right away.

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Alex Kocman

And tell us what that error and compromise is, because, I think for many of us listening, many Southern Baptists, you know, we're thinking like, well, we believe the gospel. We believe in inerrancy. You know what? What gives? Help us understand.

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Michael Clary

I would say that there is a sense of adapting our message to make it palatable for people that don't believe there's a good version of that and a bad version of that. Yeah. but all of it is assumed to be good. Any attempt to do that is assumed to be good, and that's the real problem. And then downstream of that is the effect that that has on Christians who participate in it.

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Michael Clary

And that they think that basically it's an end and the ends justify the means, sort of approach to mission. And I remember joking with my church planting friends back in the day when we were first starting. It's like, yeah, it seemed like the strategy was, let's just throw anything and everything against the wall and let's see what sticks.

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Michael Clary

Yeah, let's put guys out there who are not ready to do ministry. guys out there who will be planting churches as lead pastors that are too young to an experience, to untrained to be elders, even in churches that are sending them and they're almost sent out as a way to get rid of them because they're a.

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Alex Kocman

Nuisance and they're sending churches. There's some wisdom there.

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Michael Clary

Yeah. And, Lord help me, maybe I was that guy. I don't know, but, but I know that, that that was that was a big problem. And so what we have is, like, whatever it takes to reach people. Yeah. Becomes the.

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Alex Kocman

Anything short of sin was the line.

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Michael Clary

Anything. Yes. That's I've heard that. Oh yeah. And there is a, there's a local megachurch here in Cincinnati that they, they speak this way. And so what they do is they will do just that. And I think they actually do sin what they do. But it's, it's not something that is quite so obvious to everyone that it's a sin.

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Michael Clary

But they sin and that they, they disobey God's means to, accomplish God's ends. And so we end up watering down the message. We think whatever it takes. So if you if you want to reach somebody and you have a message that would be controversial, you know, hey, I'm going to have to confront a cultural idol here. I want to speak to something that is a real big hot button in the world.

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Michael Clary

people in the world maybe will be offended by that. they might get upset. They and they may say, I'm never coming back to this church. And Christians are just as judgmental and hypocritical as I always knew. They were. And they're self-righteous Pharisees, and I want nothing to do with the church. And this is why I hear this on Twitter all the time.

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Michael Clary

I'll say something controversial, but it's true. And I'll say it in the most gentle and, you know, appropriate way. And then people say, that's why the church is dying. That's why nobody comes to church. and I'm like, and other Christians see that and they panic. They think, oh, we don't want to do this. We don't want to offend nonbelievers.

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Michael Clary

And I'm like, Jesus offended nonbelievers all the time. Jesus was not obsessed with numbers the way we are in the modern church. And in fact, a lot of times when people get really upset, that's when you know you're over the target. I mean, people talk about acts 17 is like, that's our model, cultural engagement. You know, he stood in front of the area, guess, and he had all these wonderful things to say, and people were responsive to it.

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Michael Clary

Two chapters later, there's a riot in Ephesus. so it's like we have to have an ecclesiology and, a missy ology that accounts for both potentialities. so anyway, I think that we allow mission to justify everything. It excuses everything. And a lot of what it excuses not only damages our witness, but it damages the people in the church who then realize that what I need the spiritual food that I need the doctrine and theology.

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Michael Clary

I need the bold preaching. I need, it's being deprived of me because we want to, in the off chance that that random unbeliever that we've been praying for wonders in this morning, he or she won't be offended. But in the meantime, the sheep are starving. And so we've seen an overall theological downgrade. I think we have downgrade controversy 2.0, just like Spurgeon faced.

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Michael Clary

Yeah. So it's a modern downgrade controversy and it's justified by mission. Mission is good. We want to do it, but we want to do it in the right way and not hurt the church in the process.

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Alex Kocman

For you personally, when did you know? Right. Because you had been steeped in this for a while. I was as well. I was a part of a seeker driven church. And, you know, I think there comes a point where, you know, you're done trying to hold together certain biblical convictions with this very pragmatic methodology that you've been taught, this methodology of hyper contextualization or the church growth movement, and whatever labels you want to ascribe to that.

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Alex Kocman

But when was that moment where you knew where it set in for you that these two can't stay together? It's like oil and water because you've led your church through a journey. and you've spoken about that. So what did that look like? And I'm particularly curious the last few years, in this culture and really even globally, have been decisive along those lines.

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Alex Kocman

I think a lot of people now know, that, that the two can't go together, that you can't have your gospel cake and eat it too. You can't love the world and also be preaching, in a certain way that that alienates the world and, and expect everything to just, you know, nicely, get along together. People are realizing that there's this inflection point that we've found ourselves.

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Alex Kocman

And what was it for you?

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Michael Clary

Oh, that's such a good question. And I. I don't know that I could identify a moment. In one sense, there was always this. I was always I've always been aware since I first started of particular pitfalls. But it's like the, the, the nature of those pitfalls changed in ways that I didn't realize. So I thought back in when I first started planting, I was like, okay, the pitfall is this emerging church thing emerging.

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Michael Clary

And so I was I was I was aware of that and resisted that. But then it changed. And what I what took a while for me to realize is that the way that the pitfalls changed, I had already been a step or two into it. so part of our own story as a church is back in 2010, the way that we talked about race and, and in evangelicalism, I thought there was there were some good things that needed to be acknowledged, and I wanted to be involved in that, and I wanted to build a church that was and I'm in I'm in downtown Cincinnati, half of our city is African-American, roughly.

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Michael Clary

So I wanted to be contextually sensitive to preaching a message to reach, a population that were this part of my city. and then it was around 2015 that I started to realize that some of the talking points that I had heard and had been, I wasn't quite aware of how dangerous they were to see this is where this is where you can step in on a landmine is that if you do a certain thing and you preach a certain way for the sake of mission that does train your people, and then if you see the need to, of course, correct, then you're doing something that has seemed as a departure from

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Michael Clary

what you taught before. and that's very difficult to do because you now have a church that is expecting one thing. And a lot of times I think if you need to back out of it, it's very costly to do. So. Yeah.

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Alex Kocman

what you're catching with is what you want them to. Yeah.

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Michael Clary

Yeah, yeah, I've heard two different ways. It's like you keep them how you caught them. That's one. Yeah. And then what you win them with is what you want them to. Both of those are.

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Alex Kocman

And I combine them I mixed metaphors actually. Yes.

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Michael Clary

Yeah. You catch them how you want them to.

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Alex Kocman

But yeah any way you want it that's the way you need it.

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Michael Clary

That's right. So I started to as I, as these things started to, solidify for me, I was learning about critical race theory, and I didn't know what that was. And in the mid 2020 15 or so, and as I started to learn about that and I would read some more and I would, get educated about it, I was like, oh my goodness, these are, you know, maybe in isolation, there are little parts of this that might sound kind of good or helpful, but when you put it all together, you see, this is a package deal and this is poisonous.

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Michael Clary

so I started to, I started to speak against those things. And what I realized is that that really activated a lot of hostility, and it created this undercurrent of tension even within my own church. And that took a few years to play out. And there was one young man in particular. He was like a son to me.

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Michael Clary

There was a as a young black man, and I, like we were very close. I loved this man. he and his wife there were a wonderful couple, and I, he wanted to do ministry. He was going to Southern Seminary. And I had dreams of, you know, man, like, I would love for you to be a church planter.

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Michael Clary

I could see God, and I just it was it was so exciting. And he had drunk this poison. and he got to the point to it's like he was aware of churches predominantly white. so there was some discomfort for him. And we, you know, we talked about those things, but the whole

trajectory that he got on the led him down a course where he ended up saying on Facebook, I can't be around white people anymore.

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Michael Clary

I don't want to be, I can't be friends with white. So we unfriend it in mass. A number of white people, he started to, be very critical. He joined a very social justice kind of church in town, a church that I would say is, it seems it seems like they're heretical. I don't know that that they are a true church or that even I can't judge a person's heart, but I just, I, I have deep suspicions there.

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Michael Clary

he ended up changing his name. There was so there were so many things, and I just it broke my heart. And that's when I. That was probably one of the clearest moments for me when I recognized, man, this stuff is so horrible. And it's a way what we call mission, what we're doing is dressing up the world's priorities and baptizing them and making them appear Christian.

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Michael Clary

But it's just a way to give the world what they want, to take the world's idolatry and say, oh, your idolatry is actually Christian. Here's a Bible verse that can make your idolatry sound Christian, and it harms people. And so I, I came to the conclusion of it just in my own heart, and as a matter of my ministry priority, I decided I have to address these things head on without any qualification.

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Michael Clary

Be very direct and clear about it. because this is hurting people and it's hindering our mission. And the amazing thing that's happened is that as I have done that more, we have seen more people come to know Christ. We have baptized more people, and we've seen more fruit of ministry. And the people in our church are more emboldened to be evangelistic.

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Michael Clary

It's been very counterintuitive in a in a wonderful way, but that's all that has played out over the course of a few years. Yeah. and so that that's kind of how we got to where we are now.

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Alex Kocman

Listeners, stay tuned because we need your help. A quick question for you. First, though, Benjamin and Connie are going to serve as missionaries in Zambia focused on training Zambians for ministry. That's number one. Number two, D and C, we're just going to give you their initials are focused on evangelizing unengaged people groups in the Arab world. That's number two.

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Alex Kocman

Number three Joel and Misty are preparing to engage in discipleship ministry in Japan. So here's the question. What did these three very different sets of gospel workers have in common? It's this all three families are on pre field ministry with Abdul right now. They're still looking for prayer partners and financial supporters to join them before they can hit the ground running on the mission field.

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Alex Kocman

We have a special opportunity as a missions podcast listening community to be a blessing to the more than 100 missionaries with Abdul, who are training to get to the field. So do me a favor. Log on to Abdul Dawgs pre field all one word Abdul Dawgs pre field. Browse the catalog and find one pre field, missionary or family to pray for.

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Alex Kocman

Click on their page. Think about them. Pray that the Lord would bless them and provide for them. And then consider if the Lord would lead you to give to that missionary again. Go to AB Dawgs Pre Field to pray and support these workers in training. Let's be a blessing to them. Let's get these missionaries to the field and send them in a manner worthy of God.

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Alex Kocman

Thank you. Yeah I think if I could, you know, maybe comment a little bit on that journey that you and I think other people went on because I think it's easy for people to drill in and say, well, I'm not reading critical race theorists. I'm not a Marxist. And so I'm not influenced by this. And, you know, isn't that just a talking point used by one side of the political aisle?

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Alex Kocman

But when you start to see that it is a package deal, in other words, when you see that there's this logic that says any victim of any sort, whether real or supposed, has a moral authority such that not only should we, you know, lovingly reflect, are we loving the vulnerable as we should as Christians, but to the point where we should deconstruct and question all of our traditions and institutions?

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Alex Kocman

when you realize that that is the play that's being run on matters of sexuality as well as, culture and ethnicity and the whole lot of issues that we face. And then you realize that this is actually it's a proxy war against Christendom. It's a proxy war against, the culture that Christianity has, built. and not at all referring to, you know, quote unquote, white evangelicalism, but it's a reaction against this idea, that there is an authoritative source of truth, that there is a church of Jesus Christ, a global church, a, you know, lowercase c Catholic church, that there is this objective truth that we must conform ourselves to,

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Alex Kocman

rather than constantly deconstructing our assumptions to the point of actually, we don't really know where believe anything at all. you realize that that the Christian faith itself runs aground of this narrative, and that's this play that's being run on a massive cultural level. And then the question becomes like, well, if we've imbibed this logic in the way that we, I think with the best of motives, but with the way that many of us, you know, ten plus years ago, were approaching important things like racial reconciliation that are worthy conversations to have.

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Alex Kocman

how else has this, you know, compromised approach informed other things? how has it informed the way that we've approached, loving our LGBTQ neighbor? And this is where I'd like to take the conversation, because you've written on issues of sex and gender lately, which, of course, are critically important right now. but part of what was happening there was similar to the church growth movement, where we really thought, you know, we can love people.

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Alex Kocman

We can compromise enough to get people into our tribe who wouldn't be there otherwise. So we can get people into the doors of our church if we just change certain things about ourselves, you know, people will be inherently motivated. And we started to carry that over.

Maybe I don't need to preach as boldly on certain cultural issues or maybe I only need to say something across, you know, the table from someone over dinner.

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Alex Kocman

And maybe that's sort of a back door to evangelism. And again, don't misunderstand what we're saying here. Contextualization, hospitality, even being inviting to seekers in the context of your church service, all of those are good and have their place. It's this approach of saying that I can bring about someone's conversion or I can advance the kingdom. I can do what our ancestors failed to do because now I'm more enlightened, I'm more sensitive than they are.

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Alex Kocman

And it's sort of that chronological snobbery that we carry into everything. Yeah, yeah. Go ahead.

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Michael Clary

Yeah. If, if I contextualization is a legitimate discipline, but it is, it is informed by very specific doctrines that are biblical. And so there is a place for the, the rigorous discipline of learning how to contextualize reading a Bible in English versus reading a Bible in Korean is an example of contextualization at the most basic level. However, what happens in the modern church planning movement?

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Michael Clary

Megachurches, mission, environment in general is, we say, contextualization. But what everybody means by it is we pander to nonbelievers, and that's what we must never do. And that's what Jesus never did. And what we fail to recognize is that friction is where life

change happens. Life change doesn't happen whenever you accommodate and pander to and affirm all the world's priorities.

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Michael Clary

Well, it happens when you confront the idols. And that's, I think, and that and confronting the idols means there's conflict. That means that people will hate you. It means that people get upset and offended. They might say things, they might slander you on social media or in the newspaper. We don't want to do that. And so all the incentives of mission are, towards let's make people feel good and kind of comfort them in their unbelief and even cater ministry to accommodate unbelief in order to keep them coming around.

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Michael Clary

And that's just like, right, the, leaven in the lump.

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Alex Kocman

Right. And where we see this play out most acutely, over the last few years has been on issues of sexuality. One of these issues, like so many, that is one that we can't as Christians compromise on, that logic that says, well, let's endlessly tweak ourselves to make ourselves relevant to the unbeliever is how we find ourselves in this moment of either hot or cold.

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Alex Kocman

Either I'm going to affirm and celebrate what the culture is saying, or I am going to stand with Scripture, and it's not going to make me any friends. I'm not going to be able to, reach out in love and love people, you know, into the kingdom the way that maybe I once thought that I could, because sort of the cultural battle lines, have been drawn.

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Alex Kocman

And by God's grace, he's saving people, from a variety of backgrounds still. But all of that to set up. Michael, tell us about why you wrote the book. concerning sexuality. what you were seeing in your church, why you needed to address this topic. And, take no offense to this at all. It's not the only book that's been written on the topic.

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Alex Kocman

So what was it uniquely for you in your situation that pastorally motivated you? and as a, as a missionary, as a church planter, you felt as though you needed to say something specific to your context, taking a bold stand on that issue.

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Michael Clary

Yeah, don't take offense to it at all. There are a lot of books out there that address sexuality, like a theology that is kind of it's really academic, and that leaves questions unanswered. At the practical level, there are books out there that are marriage books, you know, date your wife and, how to communicate better. Husband and wife, she have like, marriage enrichment type of books.

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Michael Clary

and then you have, you know, books that could be sort of a diatribe against a particular issue. That's pretty narrowly focused, what I thought was missing. And, I've yet to find it's why I wrote it, because I, I've, I've yet to find a book that really addresses what I wanted to, to address is there's a theology of sexuality, and it's not there's the, the Bible versus the exegetical part, but what the scriptures tell us to do is also to observe our bodies, like our bodies, testify to some reality that we also have to account for our bodies matter.

00:27:12:11 - 00:27:37:17

Michael Clary

And the Scripture tells us that our bodies matter. And the Scripture assumes that we would get that and that, you know, like Paul, you know, in his, argument against homosexuality in Romans chapter one, he talks about the it is like homosexuality is sinful, and it's obvious because it is an unnatural act. So even the fact that how would be anybody know it's an unnatural acted because your body testifies to the fact that it's unnatural.

00:27:37:18 - 00:28:09:08

Michael Clary

Right? So the arguments of like the, the way God designed man and woman, there's the scripture that that teaches that. And then there are other things that we can that we can see and affirm from, just the way that the features of creation and the features of our bodies, and then to work those out in a practical way, in a household between husband and wife and all the unique challenges that we face in the modern time in the industrial world versus the ancient world, which is very different.

00:28:09:10 - 00:28:24:21

Michael Clary

You know, you didn't have career women, you didn't have, you know, single mothers, at least not in the same way. I mean, it was like a crisis because, like, they would die. They're destitute in the ancient world. But in the modern world, we have welfare programs. We have single moms who have. It's like things are so different.

00:28:24:21 - 00:28:51:12

Michael Clary

So how do we apply what the Bible teaches in an environment that is so contextually foreign to Scripture, foreign in the sense that the sort of life that people lived then was agrarian. Yeah. And now it's industrial. So how do we how do we make sense of these? And

I wrestled with that for years. So the genesis of the book itself was as I would speak to these things in my church, and this goes back to something you said before.

00:28:51:14 - 00:29:07:08

Michael Clary

Nobody in my church would say they're a feminist. Nobody in my church would ever say that they're a Marxist or they believe critical theory. Right? And yet whenever they speak to me, I'm like, yes, you are. You don't know it. You just don't have the right label for it. But you've drunk it in from the culture and all of your assumptions.

00:29:07:08 - 00:29:29:17

Michael Clary

The way that you speak are informed by critical theory, and by feminism. And so I needed a way to highlight that, but in a way that wouldn't freak them out because people would get freaked out if you start, if you if you challenge them in that way and any time I try to articulate it, I would feel like there's so much that so much more that needs to be said.

00:29:29:21 - 00:29:58:10

Michael Clary

And I need to say it in a, in a, in a venue where there's really space to a lot to let the argument stand and to be able to tease out, you know, all the different areas that it has to address to really be a cohesive argument. And so I wanted it to be a book that any pastor that needed a, a foundational theology that applies the theology to modern life in a gentle way, that he's not going to, that he's not going to worry about the tone.

00:29:58:10 - 00:29:59:21

Michael Clary

Or it's like, man, would you.

00:29:59:21 - 00:30:02:06

Alex Kocman

Say it's winsome, Michael.

00:30:02:08 - 00:30:12:22

Michael Clary

That that's like a trigger word for me. But yes. Yeah. Winsome in a way that I would say is gentle. Yes. It's like I would say it embodies a spirit of gentleness.

00:30:12:22 - 00:30:15:03

Alex Kocman

So which. Yeah, which is biblical.

00:30:15:03 - 00:30:35:21

Michael Clary

Yes. It's like so it's like if you, if I, if I were to speak to like, you know, an angry mob of feminists out in, you know, the, the public square somewhere, I might speak in one sort of prophetic voice, but if a man and woman come to me and they say, pastor Mike, well, we've got this massive problem in our marriage and we've got these unruly kids, and we don't know what to do.

00:30:35:23 - 00:30:56:23

Michael Clary

can you please help us? And I'm like, of course I can help you. Like, let's go to God's Word and let's walk through some of the particularities. And so there is a there is a loving, shepherding tenderness that I would speak to them and that is the voice that comes through in the book, because I'm speaking to Christians who want I'm assuming they love God, they believe the Bible, they want to apply it.

00:30:57:01 - 00:31:15:21

Michael Clary

But there's a lot of things they don't understand. There's a lot of things that are scary. If you just think about if a husband and wife, they've always just kind of operated in a feminist way in their marriage and then they get convicted, oh, you know, like we need to we need to obey God's design. And the Bible tells the husband, I'm the head of my family, and the wife should submit to him.

00:31:15:23 - 00:31:32:23

Michael Clary

We've never done this before. And that sounds scary. I thought that wives that submitted to their husbands were like, they're all abused and husbands are just these cruel tyrants. Well, that can't be right. So what do we do? The Bible. Scary. How could God teach this thing? And I would to tell them, hey, it's not as scary as it sounds.

00:31:32:23 - 00:31:56:19

Michael Clary

In fact, it's beautiful. But there's a lot of things that you need to kind of fill your mind with to flesh that out. So you could see this is actually a wonderful thing. And incidentally, there are some people have done surveys and studies on this sort of things. The happiest people on planet Earth are the people that live in a very traditional conservative way, traditional husband, wife, doing traditional roles.

00:31:56:22 - 00:32:11:17

Michael Clary

Those people self-report. They're happier. They have. They have wonderful sex lives. I mean, I'm talking about in the aggregate generalize here. So there's got that got to tell us something that God knows what he's doing, and we just need to learn how to apply it.

00:32:11:17 - 00:32:52:19

Alex Kocman

Yeah, yeah absolutely. And we were having conversations are elder team in our church. You know recently someone made the statement, you know, some people take longer to deprogram than others. again, we drink in constantly the fire hose of cultural in point of secular assumptions about, whether it's whether it's critical theory, whether it's whether it's feminism, and we, we hold biblical convictions on paper at a surface level, but our value systems and our, our prejudices in maybe the older sense of that term, you know, the, the pre judgments that we make, not even consciously.

00:32:52:19 - 00:33:22:21

Alex Kocman

Right. are all informed by those set of worldly philosophies, that we've drank so deeply from that. Well, and, and I, I commend absolutely the project of informing your congregation about it. I think that's critical for mission, because I think if we're going to look and ask, okay, why aren't we as evangelistic effective as we need to be, why is it every time we try to be missional, we end up just sort of aping what the world is doing in our in our seeker driven worship services?

00:33:22:23 - 00:33:47:23

Alex Kocman

It's because of that same thing. It's because of all of these worldly assumptions that we're imbibing. And so what would your advice, brother be to fellow church planters, fellow pastors, of course, fellow missionaries as well, who are navigating this new space? this negative world, as our friend Aaron Renne would, would call it, where all of a sudden I'm not earning any social credit by being, an outwardly identified Christian.

00:33:48:01 - 00:34:08:19

Alex Kocman

and, I'm receiving hostility. I don't have the opportunity to necessarily let people define where I stand on issues. They're already putting me in a category, you know, because I hold to these troglodyte views of marriage because I believe in, you know, headship and

submission in the home or because I believe in disciplining or educating our children in a certain way.

00:34:08:19 - 00:34:30:08

Alex Kocman

Right. All of the different ways that that culture tries to pin Christians down before we even get a chance to get a word edgewise out about the gospel. Right? Which is what we would love to lead with. We don't always have that privilege. So what would be your loving advice to those who are like yourself, who are maybe becoming more and more aware of what time it is in our current culture?

00:34:30:10 - 00:34:50:15

Alex Kocman

And, for a while, maybe your ministry has been one of some level of accommodation to unbelief and starting to question, okay, maybe I need more. I need something else here. There's a missing ingredient. Gotta go back to the old paths. What does a pastor church planter missionary do in that situation?

00:34:50:17 - 00:34:54:05

Michael Clary

That there's so many for so many things in.

00:34:54:05 - 00:34:57:18

Alex Kocman

30s or less. So go right.

00:34:57:20 - 00:35:00:04

Michael Clary

pray, trust God and be obedient.

00:35:00:06 - 00:35:02:11

Alex Kocman

Yes, pray. Get on your knees.

00:35:02:13 - 00:35:34:00

Michael Clary

I think we have to break the old the bad habits of the missional church movement. The positive thing is a desire, an evangelistic impulse. That's good. But we have to. We have to. So I'd say we have to know, think of leaven. leaven in a church works its way through and whatever you're making accommodations for concessions for, that those are idols or sins that un confronted will spread because there's nothing they never run up against resistance.

00:35:34:02 - 00:36:03:01

Michael Clary

So you cannot allow worldly ideology in the church. So discipleship and mission are not enemies. They they're two different impulses, but they're not at odds with one another. What we what we've seen in the missional church movement is this thing, this idea that's like, hey, let's make everything about mission, everything about reaching the lost and all. And I'm like, when you do that, you necessarily neglect so many other things that are that promote the health of the sheep.

00:36:03:03 - 00:36:24:16

Michael Clary

And you need a healthy church. You need healthy sheep to be able to facilitate mission. Otherwise you become a hospital type of church. In a hospital church is you have one doctor and all patients. and that will wear out the pastor and you'll never get healthy. You need to have so a healthy church of godly people.

00:36:24:18 - 00:36:46:13

Michael Clary

And here's, here's the pushback that you often hear is like, oh, we don't want to be inward focused or we don't want to be kind of insular. And I've heard that and I've allowed that. Honestly, I've allowed that threat or that potential label to I've allowed that to kind of land with me in a way. It's like, I don't want to do that and I don't want to be insular, inward focus and make you have to be inward focused.

00:36:46:13 - 00:36:52:03

Michael Clary

That doesn't mean that you are. It's not. It's not a zero sum game, or you're either outward focused or inward.

00:36:52:05 - 00:36:56:09

Alex Kocman

The shepherd should focus on the sheep at some point. Right? But yeah.

00:36:56:11 - 00:37:20:05

Michael Clary

Yeah, yeah. So Jesus gave the Great Commission, which included baptism and teaching. But also whenever Jesus commissioned Peter at the end of John and chapter 21, his, his, his, heartbeat was feed my sheep like, don't let my sheep starve. Feed my sheep. So I would say, like the best thing you can do for mission is to give your church rich theology.

00:37:20:05 - 00:37:39:18

Michael Clary

I preached a sermon this past Sunday that I thought, what is going to be a man? This is going to be hard because it's kind of it's second Peter 210 so if you are a second Peter 110,

there was the doctor who said, confirm your calling an election. so I'm like, you've got calling an election, so you have the sovereignty of God.

00:37:39:19 - 00:38:01:23

Michael Clary

But then so that's the work of God. But then you have a command to confirm it, which is an action that we take. and then the promise after that, for if you practice these qualities, you will never fall, which is a promise and an assurance of that God will preserve us. So you have assurance, you have election, you have, the potential apostasy that is a threat that we're afraid of.

00:38:02:01 - 00:38:26:03

Michael Clary

And then like, you have these complicated topics. And so I was like, okay, I'm I want to make sure I break this down very simply. But because these are heavy topics and I talked about freewill versus like the sovereignty of God and compatible ism and all this. And I thought, this is going to be one of those sermons that everybody is sort of like, I was a that was a theology lecture, and I'm just everybody was like, man, that was so helpful.

00:38:26:03 - 00:38:46:15

Michael Clary

I got like a way, unexpected amount of positive feedback because it was a rich doctrine. And these people's like when they know doctrine or whenever they understand their assurance and they understand God's power and his election, it gives them boldness and confidence and it, it fuels them. And so it's like you can like hammer people. It's like you got to share your faith.

00:38:46:15 - 00:39:04:05

Michael Clary

You got to share the faith. We got to win the win the lost. Some like you can guilt people into it. Yeah. But whenever they feel like I'm going out on a mission and the righteous, sovereign, holy, perfect, powerful God is going before me, he is preparing the soil. I just need to proclaim it boldly, without fear and call people to repentance.

00:39:04:05 - 00:39:12:00

Michael Clary

They go with they power and God works through that. And it's more evangelistic effective. I think we've really gotten the missional thing backwards.

00:39:12:02 - 00:39:42:14

Alex Kocman

Yes, it gets at this fear of man that it produces. So do missionaries accommodate themselves. Missionaries are always accommodating themselves to their hearers so that the message can land properly. But, if what that does over time is inculcate a posture of constant accommodation to where I'm afraid of you now, now I'm actually trying to tiptoe between the raindrops so that I'm not, offending you in any way.

00:39:42:19 - 00:40:05:23

Alex Kocman

No wonder we've lost the power for mission. If anything, I would rather the people of our church, the people of our missions agency, go out and be a little too bold and be a little too brash sometimes, because you can direct that. You can work with that. The raw materials are there. What you can't do is work with somebody who's so afraid to off put an unbeliever that they'll never say anything of consequence.

00:40:06:01 - 00:40:26:03

Alex Kocman

And that, I think, is the moment that we're in. We have to trust the Word of God to do what it does. and the Word of God in both books, both Scripture and nature. Right. Because on

issues, for instance, of sexuality, yes, nature speaks to us. We can see all around us. the reality of what happens when you don't follow God's good design as well.

00:40:26:03 - 00:40:52:01

Alex Kocman

We need to trust God's revelation, and nature certainly need to trust God's special, inspired, authoritative revelation in Scripture as well, and be bold and unapologetic on that. Whatever we mean by being missional, if it doesn't mean that it's not mission. I couldn't agree with you more, brother. We're coming up on a hard time break here, so please share with our listeners how they can hear more about what you're doing, how they can get their hands on your book.

00:40:52:03 - 00:40:54:02

Alex Kocman

and some of the other things that you're involved in.

00:40:54:04 - 00:41:20:06

Michael Clary

Yeah. so my name is, D. Michael Cleary. The D is my first initial so that I use it in a few places. DMichaelClary.com is a website that's got a few writings, and, the book is there. you can buy the book on Amazon. it's also in canon plus the audio version of it, but you could get the hard copy and Kindle on, Amazon and my Twitter handle, or X is @DMichaelClary.

00:41:20:06 - 00:41:35:02

Michael Clary

Clary. and that's, that's where I'm most active. I right there and then, you know, I take some of the content from Twitter and I expand it into my Substack, which is also DMichaelclary.substack.com. And I write there too.

00:41:35:04 - 00:41:55:04

Alex Kocman

Excellent. And God's good design. you have a cover quote from our friend of the show, Chris Wiley. And so, certainly good things must be contained therein. And appreciate you so much coming on the show today, brother. Hope that everyone who's heard this is challenged and encouraged, as I am at the very least. But, go ahead and send your feedback and we'd love to hear from you.

00:41:55:04 - 00:42:22:14

Alex Kocman

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00:42:22:17 - 00:42:46:03

Alex Kocman

And we would invite you to be a part of that family. Exciting things are happening, and of course you can get access to our over Time episodes as well. So make sure you check that out. And remember, the Missions podcast is a ministry of ABWE to learn more about ABWE, with a thousand missionaries reaching 84 nations and to take your next steps in obeying the Great Commission, go to abwe.org.

00:42:46:05 - 00:42:50:11

Alex Kocman

Until next time, go make disciples of all the nations and we'll see you then.